Up and Coming

Nalbro Bartley

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UP AND COMING

BY

NALBRO BARTLEY

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CHAPTER I

His name might have been Tom Tuesday or Francis Finis had the circumstances of being sent to a London orphanage so fired the beadles' imagination. But their commonplace turn of mind together with the time of his arrival caused the mite to be registered as Jones Bynight.

No one paid any attention to either name or owner until thirty years later. Having crossed the Atlantic to cast his lot with the new world, Jones became engaged to Sophia Heiser, hired girl at his boarding house in Cornwall.

Sophia regarded the name of Jones Bynight with the same awe that came to certain Americans in this year of 1861 regarding British titles. Who would not change from Sophia Heiser, orphan drudge, to Mrs. Jones Bynight, wife of a carpenter employed in building the Dunlevy mansion?

"It'll be best for both, old girl," as Jones argued, "I needs a wife to 'elp me on, you need someone to look after you. I can read and write if it don't go too deep. You can't. Your folks died in crossing

to America. I never 'ad none. Nobody gives tuppence for us. You and me can start an American family. No telling where our kids will fetch up. In merry old England all I would 'ave would be the chance to slave for somebody else. What would you 'ave 'ere? Together, we sets up to 'ousekeep and our grand-uns may live in the Dunlevy mansion yet!"

Sophia whose apple cheeked beauty was somewhat marred by smallpox marks, blushingly agreed. To her simple mind this wiry cockney was a superperson. "The chirper" he was called, a breezy sort with an "air of knowing how" even Mrs. Powder the landlady admitted.

Sophia's parents would have rejoiced at her good fortune. True, he was not of her people but this was America. Was she worthy of him? Jones assured her that she was and shortly after, it was rumored "the Dutchy and the chirper were to be spliced." Whereat Mrs. Powder felt called upon to prophesy.

"A hurrah's nest, I call it," she declared, "neither hay nor grass, this German and this Britisher passing themselves off as Yankees. I've told Sophia to be sensible and wait until the war was over, but it isn't any use when they're in love. Took her as green as a windfall, taught her everything she knows and now, when I've advanced her to a dollar a week, she up and leaves. Owns nothing in the world but a wooden box of trash and her ma's black plush dress. As for Jones—he'll soon enough repent of his bargain."

Mrs. Powder's pessimism did not delay events. Fate, in the form of a travelling circus, hurried the affair. For the management generously offered to any couple willing to be married in the lion's cage the parson's services and a three piece parlor suite. Upon hearing of the offer, Jones consulted with Sophia. Since they planned to be married, why not in the lion's cage? It required no more nerve to stand in a corner of the cage, the trainer covering the drugged animal with a gun, than to have crossed the ocean under conditions both weathered. Sophia had watched her parents buried at sea. Alone and wretched, she had survived to take her first situation at Mrs. Powder's boarding house, wondering in her patient way what fresh calamity would visit her. Having endured the orphanage and being apprenticed to a carpenter, Jones regarded the lion's cage as a lark rather than a hardship. Every effort must be made to buy a house. His children must have an education.

With a dim yet worthy vision, a nobility of soul if not of caste, they accepted the circus manager's offer. Wherewith the manager posted notices of the event, the bridal couple oblivious to public ridicule.

The evening before the wedding, Jones and Sophia inspected the three room cottage Jones had rented for —it seemed a vast sum—eight dollars a month. Jones had borrowed from his foreman and together with Sophia's few dollars, they invaded a second hand shop to secure enough for housekeeping. (The parlor suite to be delivered the day after the wedding.)

Already Jones assumed an air of ownership as he unlocked the door. It was his first experience in self respect, becoming a householder as well as a husband. He planned to teach Sophia to read and write, he would even go with her to the Lutheran Church since she was strong in the faith and he cherished none of his own.

Sophia felt equally important. She would not cry if she should break a dish during the remaining hours at the boarding house. In haste she had trimmed her mother's plush dress with beads, this was her bridal costume. Her heavy, honey colored hair would be braided fantastically, a white bow to serve as a veil. If the September day turned cold, there was her purple hug-me-tight as Mrs. Powder called it, which she had knitted in spare moments. Jones would wear his checked suit and a new derby hat. They would have some tin types made as soon as they were out of debt. For what more could one ask?

"A tidy spot," commented Jones, "let's look over the Dunlevy pile on the way back."

She nodded. To Sophia's mind the incompleted mansion of these rich Americans was of small concern. Her cottage was to be preferred. She visualized it with its parlor suite of black walnut and garnet plush, braided rugs, geraniums at the windows, she saw the kitchen clean and homelike because of her willing fingers, a pot of simmering soup giving out wholesome odors. She pictured children playing in the yard, Jones coming in to say he was

made head carpenter! In due time there would be a parlor organ, a row of books for the children to study, a gold watch for Jones, a silk dress for herself. Truly, she must prove worthy of her blessings.

Because Jones wished it, she walked aimlessly through the new mansion listening to the cost of mantelpieces, details as to the panelled rooms.

"The Dunlevys are as rich as kings," Jones confided, "yet who can tell—our children may be their neighbors. At any rate, they'll not be wed at a circus, will they, old girl?" kissing her to impress the fact that it mattered not a jot as far as he was concerned. "It's up and on in this land. What's good enough for a man's father ain't good enough for 'im. Not unless he chooses to 'ave it so. As we come up, down they goes," indicating the Dunlevy house, "every fellow out for 'imself and no one too sure of anything for long. Come along, Sophia, we've got our own 'earth—leave the poor Dunlevys their palace."

. . . . . .

By dint of hard yet harmonious work and Sophia's unquestioned thrift, Jones bought the cottage after the birth of his second child. By this time the Dunlevys were living in their mansion, entertaining lavishly and Jones was a head carpenter engaged on municipal buildings.

They called their first child Jones junior, the second Sophia. Meantime the reconstruction period following the civil war was at hand, business was

uncertain. Yet geraniums bloomed in the cottage windows and a goat furnished milk for the Bynight family. The parlor organ, gold watch and silk dress had not yet become realities. Two children and a third son to be born demanded all of Jones' wages.

Nor had Sophia learned to read. Their brief honeymoon had seen the beginning, with Jones the tender teacher, but after Sophia toiled over the alphabet, she wearied of such effort. She needed her strength for cooking, gardening, soon there were small clothes to make and dream over. She saw no need for "book ways." So Jones read aloud to her, a quite satisfactory source of information. Sophia argued that printed words made the sunset no rosier or Jones' love more true. Unconsciously, Jones enjoyed his superiority and was content to have it so.

Sophia was a satisfactory wife. He had no wish to spend his time or money elsewhere than at home. He was eager to have his son finish the grade school. Then he would have a diploma and could become a clerk, keep his hands clean at work. The plans for little Sophia and the baby, Hans, were short lived. Within a week both children died from a fever epidemic which ran its course through certain city sections.

Jones junior surviving, became his parents' idol. He possessed his mother's constitution and his father's pleasant manner but none of their virtues. To this they were blind. In him they saw the child God spared them, every hope centered about his con-

sequential little self. Nothing would be too great a sacrifice in order to give this son advantages.

No other children came to Sophia although she longed for a daughter.

"Boys marry and leave you," she told Jones, "he'll never marry no working girl like me—I want somebody for company yet."

"Jones' wife will be our daughter," was his reply, "besides, ain't you got me?"

No further tragedy came to them during Jones' childhood. They prospered modestly. When Jones was twelve years old, his father built an addition to the cottage, an extra room and a veranda. Sophia had two silk dresses and a locket and chain. She no longer scrubbed the paving stones before the cottage.

Jones senior boasted of a watch, belonging to a lodge and having several men friends whose wives called on Sophia because "she was a good, hard working German woman who can't help being real ignorant." Sophia never realized their patronage. She shared her recipes and sent them freshly baked bread, helped them make lace or knit stockings. Hers was a childish pleasure merely in being alive. She worshipped her husband and son. They owned their home and had three hundred dollars in the bank. Only once had Jones been out of work. They must be doing rightly or God would not be so kind. Sophia did not realize she had lost her fresh beauty, or notice her son's impatience when she failed to comprehend what he said. Her husband talked with

her son instead of with her, both ordered rather than consulted her. She was too happy in the security of their little home. Truly, America was the chosen land.

In the fall of 1876, Jones was killed while at work, timber falling across his chest. The company made a settlement of a thousand dollars and burial expenses, impressing upon Sophia she should be grateful they had done as much.

Too heartbroken to comprehend anything save her husband's death, Sophia turned to her son for consolation. His sympathy took the form of selfish advice. He felt his mother was useful only in a kitchen. Otherwise she disgraced him, she was illiterate, highly emotional and "pig-headed" as he graciously remarked. Years of hard work were developing a certain hysteria, common to Sophia's kind. She was given to shrill scolding, brooding silence followed by a childish light-heartedness and foolish efforts to atone for her behavior.

CHAPTER II

YOUNG Jones progressed in school unevenly. He refused to apply himself. To finish the grade school with as little effort as possible was his intention. His father's primary class education furnished no incentive to go further. Bynight's death gave his son the upper hand. Why remain in this working-man's cottage? His schoolmates lived in far better neighborhoods, he was ashamed to have them at the house which angered his mother. She would persist in elaborate German cooking to make amends for her lack of culture.

"Do they eat any better than that—tell me!" she would demand, heaping his plate with some indigestible delicacy.

Jones did not choose to forge ahead in the same way his father had done, much less to serve anyone else. He prevailed upon Sophia, against everyone's advice, to sell the cottage and buy a small grocery business, forerunner of the delicatessen store. She could bake goods for an added attraction and carry a line of tobacco and candies. Over the store were living rooms into which they moved and a garden patch lay behind the frame building.

"Buy it at the German's woman's," became a

neighborhood slogan; even the Dunlevy's sent their coachman for some of the Saturday apple cakes.

Grieving for her husband and puzzled as to her son, Sophia turned to work with fanatical energy. To employ help would be sinful. She must save to secure her son's carefree future. The store yielded a good living. There were small overhead expenses. Sophia did all her housework and baked at night. Jones went to parties.

He matured early, a handsome, worthless lad with a carefully cultivated mustache and an eye for trim ankles. He boasted of his top hat and flourishing handwriting as well as the ability to sing popular songs and accompany himself on the guitar.

At eighteen, his relationship with his mother was openly contemptuous. He considered himself a gentleman who must marry his equal, his children would be the "real thing." He saw nothing wrong in pilfering his mother's money or telling her to "hush up" in no uncertain fashion.

His was a lazy routine. He waited on the store some of the time but the day was fast approaching when he would refuse to tie a white apron about his slender waist and ladle out prunes to the populace. Neighborhood girls were his constant patrons—to Sophia's disapproval. She regarded them as "lazy flirts looking down on a poor hardworking woman." Miserliness began to dominate her nature.

Jones dressed in the latest style, his mother refusing to buy herself new clothes. For what? She was a widow, her son never went out with her, nor could

she leave her store. People did not care to visit with her—merely to buy her wares. Inwardly, she regretted the lack of education, she wished she had kept at the lessons her husband so romantically offered. She was bitter because she realized it was of no use to struggle, life was a finished, stale affair as far as her progress was concerned.

She had learned to sign her name and to count, no one fooled her in business matters except her son who purposely misrepresented and misquoted. Wholesale drummers insisted on dealing with Sophia, they had no use for her swaggering son who took charge of the profits and caused many of the losses.

To rent the smartest team in town and take girls driving while his mother toiled baking her coffee cakes or washing his clothes was what occupied Jones these days. His was the stage of despising what had gone before but not ambitious for what might come, a selfish outlook precluding responsibility or progress.

Shame entered into his thoughts but never inspiration. His father was a cockney carpenter, his mother an ignorant working girl—their marriage taking place at a circus all for a parson's fee and some furniture! Such a background would not be his son's—his son must marry a lady but he never planned how this would come to pass, what portion of the progress was his own concern.

A weak character, the rebound from his parents' strength, he proved harsh and tyrannical in personal

relationships and easy, even stupid in his dealings with the world.

By the time Jones was twenty, his mother lacked the vigor to shoulder the day's task. This did not make for mutual harmony. When winter set in, with Sophia wretched from rheumatism and scolding like a shrew, Jones was obliged to bestir himself to the extent of making fires and carrying on the business in some sort of fashion.

But he could not dress foppishly and go forth to matinees or hang around pool rooms, playing for individual pies and weak sherry instead of money as was then the vogue. He must open the store, listen to his mother's complaints. A few weeks of which brought him to the decision that he would look for employment elsewhere. He was foolish not to have done so sooner, anything away from "the damned store."

After the holidays, Sophia staggered to her feet as regarded running the business, heartbroken from her son's neglect. She had withered, it seemed, her bacon colored skin wrinkled and drawn and her bright eyes like a restless bird's. In a wool dress her feet encased in carpet slippers and her thin hair strained into a knob, she presented anything but a pleasing appearance, yet her baked goods were in demand immediately.

Jones announced his plans. "I'm no cotbetty," he said in part, "and since you are feeling barely tolerable, I'm going to Grimshaw and Grimshaw to see if they want a man for the road. I've got to

get away. If you had been a different sort, I'd have gone through the academy—here I am, over twenty, wasting my time behind a counter."

An abusive tirade answered him. Jones was an ingrate, he hated his mother—better she should know it, she who loved him so. How had he acted during her illness—excepting when strangers were about, then he was polite to an alarming degree! He despised her, but God would punish him! Wait until he raised a son and that son turned on him and reproached him for what he had *not* done. She was glad his father was not here to witness his infamy. Had she not given him everything she could—how was she to know he must go to the academy? Was not his diploma from the grade school framed, proof of an education? It was the girls and the pool parlors that prevented his advancing. Once she thought America the finest land—when she was a bride and her dear husband was with her. Now she doubted the high sounding talk about America. Did mothers raise children only to have the children ashamed of their mothers? If so, the system was wrong. Better the child respect his parents even if he remained at their level . . . he could go get his white fingered job—she would not interfere. He would be glad enough to come home to have his clothes mended, be fed and rested. And she would not refuse. Because he failed in his duty she would not in hers. He was her darling son, her firstborn—the tirade accentuated by the terrible boredom of drudgery Sophia had endured ended in sentimental hysteria.

Jones assured her this was all wrong, he paid careless tribute to pave the way for a loan and then set about to find a situation. He was a tall, handsome youth, better dressed than most. Grimshaw and Grimshaw were favorably impressed, they wanted someone to cover the rural districts of that state. The salary was small but the occupation pleasing. Jones signed a contract.

The more he thought of it, having explained it in exaggerated terms to everyone, the better pleased he was. He was stepping up; in line to become a salesmanager. This spurt of ambition caused him to devote a week to learn the stock and study the rural railway system. Most of the territory would have to be covered with a horse and wagon.

Gradually, Sophia reflected his pride. Her son was a travelling salesman, he had bought her a housedress, at wholesale, a stylish thing she thought. He insisted she wear a cap when waiting on the store. Too long had he endured the comments about her hair dressing. He bought himself a portmanteau, his mother gave him a set of brushes and, promising to write all the girls, Jones started on his new career.

The position suited, a limited occupation requiring just such an easy way as Jones had, an ability to flatter, delighting to travel from hamlet to hamlet, staying at local hotels and joining for the time being into the local life.

Sophia soon found she must hire help. She was unable to read her son's letters, another drawback. She could not manage with a woman, no girl would

work as hard as Sophia had done at the boarding house. Girls demanded three times as much wages and gave three times as little work. Sophia complained they had no personal interest in the business, were wasteful, dishonest. After several attempts at giving girls what she considered was a good home, she hired a man and paid him an amount beyond her wildest calculations.

All this time Jones was sauntering, so to speak, throughout the countryside, drinking more than was wise but on the whole making good for his firm. Competition was not keen. Jones was amiable, he would wait around until the storekeepers were inclined to gossip—and buy. He liked being removed from the grocery store atmosphere, his mother's scolding, and he greatly enjoyed having a girl in every town, his veneer of city polish helping to capture the belles with small effort.

When he reported at headquarters in Cornwall, he was even polite to his mother, since he did not have to live with her. He knew his place was with her but justified his absence by arguing that he was advancing in the world, surely it was one's duty to advance.

He gave his mother presents but never money and spoke of refurnishing their living rooms. He insisted she have the building painted and buy striped awnings.

"Wait until you bring your fine wife home," Sophia would say when he protested their meagre equipment.

"As if a fine lady would come here," was his retort.

"Good enough for your mother, good enough for her," was the jealous answer.

Jones had never been in love with anyone save himself. He was popular with too many girls to think of one seriously. A wife was a difficult proposition to his reckoning. His mother would not be easy to live with unless the girl were of her own calibre. Most certainly Jones would never marry that kind of a girl. He had best remain single.

CHAPTER III

DURING a trip in the second year of his drummership, Jones was taken ill at the hamlet of Naples and forced to remain. Severe weather coupled with indiscreet drinking brought on old fashioned grippe. As he lay in the hideous room of the Hotel Crystal, dependent on indifferent attention and a country doctor who had scant patience with city fellows, Jones had an infantile longing for his mother's nursing, her love which knew no rebuff.

He was up against the "cold, cold world" as the popular song then in vogue described and the result was childish homesickness. He reminded himself that a man his age—almost twenty-three—ought to be married. Who would care for him if he should be seriously ill? What was the sense of travelling about without a home to return to? As soon as he was out of this wretched room, he would find a suitable girl and make love to her!

She must be educated, according to his ideas, and capable, strong yet good to look upon, someone with an even temper, kindly disposed to his mother. That she would adore him, he took for granted. What he might have to offer such a person was quite beside the question.

These altruistic qualifications attracted him to Martha Dunning, the Naples school teacher. Martha boarded at the hotel, her home being inaccessible during the winter. She had often noticed Jones in the dining room or taking some of the girls to ride. But Martha was not the flirtatious sort. Her father was a prosperous farmer and her step-mother regarded Martha as a dreamer "slow as the mountains" when it came to getting the work underway. Family tradition had it that Martha was so gullable when a child, she allowed a younger brother to cut a hole in an umbrella so as to look out and see when it stopped raining.

As much as possible, Martha lived in her tiny book-world, Pilgrim's Progress, the Bible, Sunday school stories of sugary goodness. Her step-mother declared Martha was like her mother who had been a "clinging vine sort" as she said in the child's presence. Since a stepchild receives only the love it creates from step-parents, Martha had scant affection at her step-mother's hands. Her half brothers and sister were given the preference and Martha was merely an "also ran." When she was finally appointed to teach the Naples school, her step-mother announced her satisfaction and her father dully accepted his wife's opinions as final.

With a high heart and emotional vision, Martha at seventeen came to Naples, returning home only for vacations. She was good to look at, her far apart dark eyes suggesting the orient, her nut brown hair braided about her well shaped head. She had

a strong, sure body, a contrast to her sensitive, uneven features. She made her own clothes, simple, colorful things and paid for her board and room by waiting on the hotel table mornings and evenings.

After six years of this, Martha longed to be loved. She was an ambitious optimist with a courageousness of soul not apparent upon first acquaintance. Idealistic yet handicapped by the present day sentimental standards, Martha forced herself to be blind to others' defects. She would not see things as they were because all too often, things were wrong. She preferred to be absurdly credulous and imbued with orthodox theology. She believed in a regulation heaven and hell and when she caught herself wondering, she prayed to be forgiven.

In brief, Martha knew what was right but she had no inkling of what was wrong. She had never been in a town larger than five thousand population. Naples was barely nine hundred. She had hopes of some day attending a city normal school and becoming an academy teacher, living in a real boarding house, free to go to theatres and concerts. But should she marry, her children must go to college, become cultured men and women no matter what effort was needed to bring this to pass.

To date she had had but one bonafide suitor, an impossible countryman who would sit for half an hour at a time in bashful silence and then scrape back his chair and drive home without having said any of the boorish compliments which snailed through his brain. Martha had been annoyed by his

homage. Mr. and Mrs. Aziah Musty, proprietors of the hotel, joked about "Marthy's beau—Phineas Bates—the cat's got his tongue and Marthy's stole his heart!"

"Marthy deserves a good man," Mrs. Musty declared, "but she's that easy she is likely to get a bad one. Anyhow, the school board knows it won't find a finer little school marm in the township."

It happened that Mr. Musty who carried up Jones' meals was not home the Sunday evening Jones was pitying himself and planning to marry. Unexpected guests came in for supper and in the general flurry, Mrs. Musty asked Martha to "run up with the drummer's vittles, I notice he eats, sick as he claims to be."

Martha shouldered the tray. She considered Jones a dashing chap who would never glance at her twice. Besides, she was a little his senior if what he said of his age was true. She was sorry he was ill and away from home. She rearranged the tray before she took it in.

Jones was sitting in a topheavy rocker, unshaven and white faced, the smoky lamp showing an untidy, forlorn room.

"Dear me," began Martha gently, "you need housecleaning. Draw up to the table, I'll set the tray there. If you want more of anything you can have it. Staying indoors usually dulls an appetite. I'll light a candle and take this lamp down and clean it—I better rake up the coals, too, a fire is such a cheery thing."

Jones agreed. With scant ceremony he set to

work at his supper. Martha returned with the cleaned lamp and more coal. He watched her coax the fire into a blaze, sweep the hearth, dust about a little. She drew the shades evenly and re-made his bed. Everything she did was deft, it produced a miraculous change in the atmosphere. She hummed as she worked. When she came to take away his tray he saw how lovely her brown hair was, how dark and wise her eyes. Her personality stimulated him. He liked the red wool dress with its pale blue neck-ribbon. Her feet were small, well formed despite thick boots. Here was a girl with brains and yet she could work—a pleasing combination.

"Don't go," he begged, "it's awfully dull—I'd like to talk."

"But I wait table," she explained, smiling.

"You are Miss Dunning, the school teacher, never let me have a second word with you, did you?" Jones fibbed, "had to be sick and half frozen before you'd bother. That's a fine way to treat a chap"; he felt very much better. He wished he had shaved and put on a collar and tie.

Martha blushed. There was something pleasant in this bantering, she was glad she had put on the blue ribbon.

"I must go," she said slowly, "Mrs. Musty has company."

"Please bring me more coffee," was his gallant order, "and if you have a spare moment—would you mend a fellow's glove? I'll buy you the finest blue ribbon you ever saw—is it a bargain?"

"I'll gladly mend the glove but you must not bother about a ribbon. I will either send or bring the coffee. You need kindling, too. It will be a cold night."

Jones coughed.

"How does the doctor say you are?" she lingered at the door.

"Oh, so-so. He doesn't think anyone is sick unless they've been run through a thrashing machine. I expect to be out by Tuesday—but you have done more than the doctor. Just your smile would cure a chap."

Martha shook her head, embarrassed yet pleased.

"Bring the coffee yourself," he urged, "I must talk to you."

So Martha brought the coffee and the kindling and by the time she mended the fire, Jones experienced a thrill of interest. Here was a farmer's daughter yet a school teacher, strong, lovely and gullable! What a wife she would make—why look further?

When Jones left Naples the last of the following week, the town knew he was "sparking the school marm." Certainly he had bought her the handsomest ribbons he could find and box candy besides and taken her sleigh riding although he had been supposed to have had grippe.

What the understanding between them was even Mrs. Musty was unable to ascertain.

"Marthy's a pretty fine girl," Mr. Musty told Jones, "I want her to get as good as she deserves or else stay single and count her blessings."

Jones agreed. Well he knew Martha's cheeks flushed at his approach and her eyes brightened. He had properly impressed her with his city manners, spoken familiarly of the theatre and opera, the town families—the Dunlevys for instance, of his mother's flourishing store and the money she had made therein. Jones knew how to sell merchandise—himself included.

He wrote her every day in his flourishing, copper plate hand and sent her a silver backed comb and brush when he reached Cornwall. His letters became longer and more sentimental. More and more he felt she would be the ideal wife. Her cheery presence stayed in his memory no matter how many other girls he flirted with, there was a childish sense of security in the hope of marrying Martha.

He mentioned nothing of this to his mother who was almost childish after the lonely winter. But he cleared some of the "trash" from the house and set to work to refurnish, Sophia paying the bills. He had a body brussels put down in the parlor, a yellow scrolled paper on the walls, some tufted chairs and a set of second hand historical novels in a little case. To change the rest of the place would be Martha's task. He bought some unusually striking clothes and began using a perfumed hair oil. The neighborhood girls teased Sophia about Jones' being in love. Some fine day he would bring home his wife—wait and see.

Wearied of work and its futility, Sophia said she would be glad if it would stop her son's foolishness.

He would stay home, perhaps enlarge the business, get rid of hired help.

But Jones admitted nothing of his plans. He returned to Naples in the spring to find Martha even more lovely. She suggested spring herself in her eagerness at seeing him. She believed him both handsome and wise; a slight estrangement had grown up between the Mustys and herself due to their lack of approval of Jones. Martha had made herself a frock the color of daffodils to wear for his coming and her broad hat was trimmed with violets.

The town wondered if the city drummer would make a good husband. Some of the girls envied her, the older people shook their heads.

For two weeks Jones paid dutiful and unflagging court. Each day he hired the fastest horse and best buggy to drive over to Martha's school and bring her home. There was no mistaking his devotion. The dirt road contained many "thank-you-marms" which caused him to curse and lash his horse, yet when he was driving Martha back, he was jovial about the mud ruts, talking nobly of how a horse deserved consideration, easy driving.

"How's this for high?" he asked one day as he drew up beside the churchyard, a secluded spot to talk, particularly when conversation was of a most personal nature. "Well, sorry yet that you know me?"

Martha's smile reassured him.

He reached over and kissed her. "I guess we

understand each other without any more waiting," he said.

Driving by a little later, Aziah Musty was the first to be included in their confidence.

"She's promised to marry me this same June," Jones announced, "tell the board to find another teacher," his arm around Martha with an air of authority.

"Sizzling buckwheats," was the flattering reply, "Marthy, have you thought it over careful like?"

Martha nodded, too happy and confused to speak.

"Wal," Mr. Musty concluded. "I'll git home to tell mother—she'll know best what to say to both of you."

Neither Mrs. Musty's protests nor the disapproval of Martha's family who suddenly became actively interested in her future, had any influence. On a late June day, Martha and Jones were married in the parlor of the Crystal Hotel, with the school children forming the majority of the guests.

Triumphant and swaggering, more nervous than was usual, Jones signed the marriage register, kissed his bride and ordered their luggage taken to the station. His mother's absence was explained by ill health, he was to take Martha to her without delay.

"Like as not to do the housework," sniffed Mrs. Musty, "funny she never wrote nor sent Marthy anything—even Marthy's folks give her a hundred dollars. She says he ain't got any folks but his mother—that makes it all the worse—sounds to me as if Marthy would have to buckle to. The Lord

should have put it somewheres in the Bible that no girl ought to live with her husband's people—then maybe folks would have paid attention."

"Young Bynight got the best half of the bargain," was her husband's comment.

CHAPTER IV

JONES began the gentle art of disillusionment as soon as they were on the train.

"Mother is an old German woman, you mustn't mind her ways—as good as gold at heart but her ideas aren't like ours. She never had a chance at school."

"School isn't everything," Martha corrected generously, she was looking at the wide gold ring on her wedding finger. Just then nothing mattered save that she was Jones' wife, going to live in the city.

"It matters a little," determined to satisfy his frail conscience and tell Martha as much as possible before she arrived home. "My father was an Englishman, he could read and write. Mother said he tried to teach her but housework and babies interfered. So poor mother only knows how to sign her name and here I am with a grade school diploma while you are a graduate of an academy. I wonder how you ever looked at me twice—and where our children will fetch up."

"College graduates," was her quick answer, a puzzled look in her dark eyes. "I didn't know your mother was illiterate, you never said just that."

"But you're no snob," he reminded tenderly, one hand stealing over to clasp hers.

"Of course not—only I never thought of her just that way."

"She's as fine a mother as a man could have only she gets on my nerves with her shabby dress and broken talk, peasant habits I guess you would call it. Work, work, work with a glass of beer and a sandwich at night while she gossips about the neighbors. But if anyone is in trouble, she is first to help. It has been too much work for her always but she wouldn't be happy doing any other way. She doesn't know anything else although I've been at her to sell the store ever since she had rheumatism."

"Will you stay on the road?" Martha asked.

"Not now, my dear," he smiled beguilingly. "I'm going to ask for a city salesman's job, think I'll get it, too. Remember, I'm not intending you to live over the store and work like mother. Just for a few months until I get started in town. We'll move into a good neighborhood and that will be an end to the store keeping. You must be patient, remember you have married a man who is not worthy of you," beginning that timeworn defense which should excuse his shortcomings on the ground of her superiority.

Martha did not see through the ruse. She felt magnanimous towards this wornout mother and a pride and trust in Jones. Nothing could dim her gladness.

They stayed a few days at a town near Cornwall

where Jones conducted his business and showered attention on his bride. A silk dress, a plumed hat and boots with tassells were among his offerings. They occupied the best suite in the hotel and went carriage riding and to the minstrels. Martha wrote everyone how happy she was, what a wonderful busband Jones proved to be. She invited them to Cornwall to witness her good fortune. She made Jones go to church, he did not object—this once. He was proud of Martha and somewhat worried over bringing her to his mother who was unaware of her existence. Something in Martha's happy eyes made him reluctant to confess his deceit.

A few days later they went on to Cornwall. It was not until they were nearing the station that Jones told her.

"I could not write mother only to have strangers read and tattle the news," he said in self defense, "when I was home, she was too ailing to talk to seriously. So I concluded to marry and bring you back to her. When she sees what a sweet girl you are, she'll love you and forgive me. You forgive me, don't you, sweetheart?"

"You haven't even told her?" Martha said slowly, "why—you—you fibbed then about her messages, the lace she wanted to give me—the love she sent. Jones, I don't like beginning this way."

He pulled his hat over his eyes, tugging sulkily at his brush of a mustache. "Not my fault," he complained, "I've tried to be fair—aren't you broad minded? Mother is mother—you'll have to adjust

yourself to her ways, it is easy enough. Her scoldings go in one ear and out the other as far as I'm concerned. She means well. Come, Martha, don't be rough on a fellow—I'm square enough. You couldn't have done any better. We won't be living over the store long—and mother will be a lot of help to you in the cottage."

Martha stared out the window, the smoky, dirty station confused her. She realized how dependent she was upon one Jones Bynight, how removed from her former environment. Foolish pride and her romantic heart combined to make her accept his arguments.

"I suppose you were not to blame, but I wish she knew. Don't let's live over that store for long—I'd never want any company there."

"You bet we won't," relieved at her quick forgiveness. "And don't let mother bother you. Remember, she can't help being different."

But neither Martha nor her mother-in-law were capable of impersonal viewpoints, both were desperately personal. The bread labor of Tolstoy's advising had comprised Sophia's life, unconsciously she was jealous of a woman who taught school instead of washed clothes. She resented her son's deceit and, true to form, blamed his wife for it. She had put him up to it. Because he had married a school mistress with a silk dress and plumed hat, she would not wait on her. She would still serve her son and the customers but never her daughter-in-law. The sooner this was understood the better. Martha must

prove herself useful. Having married Jones, she could accept what he offered or go without. Sophia would not sell her business to go live with her son's wife and do their work while they spent her money, relinquish her one claim to economic independence. She felt a renewed interest in the store, an unworthy delight in watching Martha mourn stoically over uncongenial surroundings. Inwardly, Sophia pitied her daughter-in-law, she recognized her as being of finer clay than Jones. But she would never admit it. Instead, she scolded and sulked until Martha began to live within a life of her own—a thought world peopled with her children and their glorious, untrammelled futures.

She did not share this vision with Jones. Indeed, after a few weeks Jones became as indifferent to Martha's wishes as to his mother's. She was too useful a wife to remain a romantic consideration. He loved her in a shallow, tyrannical fashion but he wanted to be going about as he wished, seeing the latest shows, playing cards in the backrooms of saloons, gossiping with men of his own kind. His wife and mother, no matter how uncongenial, must combine to make his home comfortable.

He refused to listen to his mother's protest as to Martha or Martha's gentle complaints.

"Fight it out between you,'" he would say, jauntily reaching for his hat, "you wouldn't be humans if you didn't like to have something to row about. Mother, don't you order Martha around—if she wants to stay upstairs instead of waiting on trade, she can do

it. Never you mind about my mother's fussiness, Martha, she has the right to be so."

A readjustment of affairs happened after several months of this sort of existence. Sophia fractured her ankle. She was helpless and in pain to say nothing of being under abnormal expense.

Her son regarded the accident as a personal grievance but Martha took advantage of it to prove her worth yet assert her independence.

By this time, she had relinquished any hope of knowing people or enjoying social life. Already a barrier between herself and the world was erected. But she comforted herself with the thought that her children would prove a sufficient source of contact. She no longer curled her hair or wore silk dresses. Her books were unpacked but not arranged, her trinkets huddled together in her bedroom. She lacked ambition to bring about any improvements which would necessitate arguments with Sophia. She told herself she must wait until she should be in her own home, that this interlude was to teach patience, tolerance.

Now that her mother-in-law was helpless, Jones' lack of sympathy spurred Martha to action. She nursed her tenderly, doing the housework as well, flying down at each tinkle of the store bell. She could not, however, manage the baking. So customers went away empty handed as regarded "those good German things."

"I wish I could bake them," Martha said, "I'm afraid they will start going somewhere else."

Sophia's face brightened. This commercial interest won her heart.

"Ya," she agreed, "so it is!" Then she proposed that Martha push her in a chair to the kitchen table and let her try to mix the dough while Martha took the steps. Martha agreed.

It was a hard morning—that initial baking—Sophia's voice scolding shrilly, endless trips to the store, getting dinner for Jones and seeing the baked goods was finished to Sophia's satisfaction.

In the afternoon Sophia insisted on another baking session. Jones came home to eat, commenting flippantly on "the new bakeress, good luck to her." Obligingly, he agreed to stay away for supper—a friend had invited him to his house, Martha had been asked also but he knew she could not leave his mother.

For a moment Martha wanted to desert her post, dress in her best and leave this hideous little place with its odors of cooking. She started to protest Jones' selfishness but the sight of his mother made her hesitate. Of what use would it be to go—only to return to the same environment and be disliked for her rebellion.

CHAPTER V

THAT night after the shop was closed and Martha, aching of bone and weary of heart, had seen that Sophia was comfortable, she went into her room preparatory to a long, helpful cry. But the jingle of Sophia's bell called her back to duty.

Biting her lips to gain self control, Martha answered. The old woman wanted her to sit beside her, she resented Jones' conduct to his young wife. Sophia realized the hard future which lay before Martha, also that there was little to be done about it. She, Sophia, had married a man who worked for her and loved her. But this girl who proved worthy of the hardest task and who was gentle of heart as well, she had married a man who would neglect her. To Sophia's untrained mind education caused the situation. Those years at school when Jones should have been working had done the mischief. She wanted to tell her daughter-in-law something of this, that she was proud of her and grateful for all her labor but she did not know how. She dimly comprehended that Martha felt removed from Sophia's world, soul bruised and physically depleted as well, that her one hope was in the thought of

the child which was to come to her, that hope alone removed her from utter despair.

So the conversation was of monosyllable variety. Sophia could not bring herself to abuse her son and her praise of Martha was merely praise for baking the bread stuffs an even brown—not praise for her valiant spirit. Martha regarded her as a cross old woman who hampered progress, she said goodnight as soon as possible.

Martha did not wholly blame Jones but his mother! When they had their own home and Sophia was not with them, things would be different. Their children would make it so. She almost had a vision to this effect.

Only once before had Martha had a vision. That was on a June Sunday when she was playing the church organ. During the ponderous sermon, she feasted her eyes on the fields without—sun drenched fields of flowers, flickers, meadow larks, bluebirds called to her as she gazed. Just what her vision had consisted of would have been impossible to define. It hinted of a blossoming of soul, a greatness of purpose. No brittle details marred the vague splendor, she had seemed close to a divine presence. She remembered the effort it had been to turn back to the wheezy organ and play a stereotyped hymn of grace.

So it was this night. Oblivious to the lamp lit room with its cheap furnishings, the city hum which drove past the window, the broken groans of the sleeping woman, Martha sat with her tired head rest-

ing on one fine, strong arm and felt again a fragrant nearness to something inspiring.

She was seeing her son as a man of high ideals, achievement. In him was her reward for drudgery, disillusionment. And she was glad. The reward would be sufficient.

This third Jones Bynight, for she must have a son, would climb high—Just then Jones came in to find her. She did not notice his intoxication, she was not inclined to find fault or complain of neglect.

Jones was excessively goodnatured, relieved not to be greeted with nagging. "You are a fine girl," he began, kissing her noisily. "I bet you're tired out. But you've shown mother you can go her one better. I hope she appreciates it. To tell the truth, since I've watched how you take hold of things, I'm going to give up my job and add on to the store, work back into it myself. That would give you time for the house—and a little baking. We could build up a big business, Cornwall's growing. I mean to keep mother out of it, she's too old fashioned and cranky. What do you say?"

"I'd rather have you with Grimshaw," Martha protested, "I'd always be in the store more or less, no matter what you promised."

"I don't see why. Grimshaw won't advance me much more. I want to be my own boss. This is a fine little business only it needs up-to-date methods. We would have a fine store—you and me, Martha," he put his arm around her.

"I won't have time from now on," she reminded,

"don't you realize I'll be busy with our child?" Her face was very lovely as she looked up at him.

Jones shrugged his shoulders. "He'll be a lot of bother," he objected, "gad, I hate to hear a baby holler—I hope he'll be quiet."

"But they're so wonderful," she was tearful, "why talk of being a bother? Do you begrudge me to the child, is that it? Can't you ever think of anyone but yourself and your interests?"

"I thought of you enough to marry you," was his retort, "I'm glad for the child only I want business on a settled basis—and mother's a bother, no use talking. I'm thinking as much for your interests as my own. You women are all the same, cry babies and complainers. Ready to snap a fellow up on the least pretext." He threw off his coat and sat down heavily in a chair. "You look like the devil in that dress and your hair uncombed," he commented, "I wonder why women as soon as they are married grow careless in appearance. Men never do."

"Men don't stay home and work sixteen hours out of the twenty-four, taking care of someone else and a business, too, doing their own house work the best they can. Men seldom do anything they don't want to do. You wouldn't do for your own mother what I do—and little thanks for it do I get. You aren't fair to either of us. You didn't tell me the truth about your mother and you didn't tell your mother about me. I can see there's little ahead for me—but I'll see that there's a lot ahead for my children," Martha wondered at her own spirit.

Jones stood up and kicked the chair out of the way. His good humor changed to ill. "You with school marm airs—hoity hoity! I suppose you think you're better than we are. I noticed your family didn't make much of you and you were glad enough to get married. Suppose I didn't tell you everything —'all's fair in love and war'—ain't it? You probably thought you'd be a lady and never do a lick of work. Read books and dream—like an old maid. I guess I average up as good as any man—I support you—I never abused you, did I?"

Martha was silent.

"My mother has always worked harder than you," he added, irritated by her silence. "Why, she never knew what natural gas or a carpet sweeper was. You better count your blessings."

"That is why you despise her," Martha found herself saying, "Do you want your son to be as you are, aren't you hoping he will be a finer, wiser man? That's the very spirit of fatherhood."

"I don't want any starchy airs. I want to see him a success but I won't work my fingers off to give it to him. He'll only look at me as you say I look at my mother. Have sense, don't stay up in the clouds. You and me have a long time to live together and we better get along as easy as we can."

"That is true," she said soberly.

He turned to leave the room. "I'm going to get some beer—want a glass?"

"No, I'm tired."

"Oh, of course," was the tender answer.

Still Martha's vision was unclouded. She would forge ahead for her children, reform their father, remove their grandmother's carping influence, keep sane of mind and strong of body in order to accomplish her programme.

According to tradition the snakes' skins and gobblers' breastbones all agreed on a mild winter. But Martha found it anything but that. Sophia did not regain health, palsy settled upon her and she was dim of sight. She was forced to sit with shaking hands and watch Martha assume command. She became silent as to her opinions.

Jones took occasion of this illness to resign from the drygoods concern and enlarge the grocery store. He forced his mother to advance the money for improvements. Martha was unable to be downstairs and care for his mother, too, so Jones ran the business and ran it badly.

Gradually, Martha and Jones dropped any pretense at the niceties of life, theirs became a sordid partnership, that of many husbands and wives who have let romance die. Jones began to regret his "early marriage with a school teacher." He felt Martha too sensitive and dreamy to suit his needs, she lacked a coarseness of makeup which he admired. For instance, he was provoked when she disliked his cheap stories and refused to drink with him, she frowned at playing pedro for small sums in company with married couples of questionable calibre.

She was both drudge and dreamer; his mother had been solely a drudge. That was endurable. But a

dreamer was beyond him, a constant source of irritation. Moreover, there was the legal finality to their relationship which encouraged the bully and tyrant in his nature.

In the spring, just before Martha's son came, Sophia died. She seemed a wretched child as she lay in her coffin, heavy lines caused by work and suffering criss-crossing on her thin forehead.

Her death was a relief to Martha but a joy to Jones. He could spend his mother's thrifty savings as he wished. Martha felt a spiritual lightening, the heavy influence of this disappointed old soul was lifted and new courage given her instead. She would rely on the child's birth to make Jones realize the man's part he must play. They would leave the grocery store environment. She began to hope anew, like a dying blaze rekindled by unexpected breezes. She was almost content. Yet she missed Sophia, an unspoken camaraderie had developed between these two, they both loved the same worthless man!

CHAPTER VI

In June, 1885 the third Jones Bynight wailed into the world to his mother's delight and his father's annoyance.

For a period of fifteen days, Martha "played lady" as Jones reminded her. That is she had the indifferent services of a midwife until she struggled onto her feet and went to work.

Jones said she pampered the baby, if he wanted to cry, let him—it developed his lungs. Why this washing and fussing all the time? Let him alone. Anyone would think him a prince consort to see his lace trimmed clothes—a baby was a baby, a noisy addition to the household. Martha made a fool of herself.

Besides building on bay windows and buying new scales, Jones had done little to improve the business. He could not be satisfied to remain in the store. Even the glistening sign of "Jones Bynight, Greengrocer" gave him no sense of ownership. Too often he left the place in the thieving hands of a clerk and went to play cards or swap tales with bar room cronies. It was a relief to be away from the atmosphere of baby clothes and Martha's white face. He

was unconsciously jealous of her devotion to the boy. She had less time to cook his favorite dishes or pamper his whims. He regarded the child with anything but affection. When he brought people up to see him, always at a most inconvenient time and usually waking him from a nap, he would say:

"A bouncer, isn't he? Let's hope he grows up to be a credit to his poor old dad."

When Jones junior was six weeks old, Martha returned to waiting on store. She had mentioned she wished his mother might have lived to see her grandson.

"Then we'd have had two babies on our hands—no, thank you. You and mother would have quarrelled over his care—she wouldn't have done the things you do. A regular old fuss."

"I don't do half the things I would like to," Martha protested, "I wish he could have a nursery all in white——"

Her husband cut her short. "You'd like heaven itself, wouldn't you? Wait until you've had another and you'll not be particular. You don't realize how I need you downstairs—hired help is very unreliable. Surely you could bring him down in a basket for a few hours a day?"

So Martha did. The mechanical round of life gripped her, she knew it was futile to protest. She realized she was the stronger, better person, helpless because of her husband's weakness. She must be man of the family yet do a woman's work. She stopped idealizing Jones, hoping he would become

other than a critical idler who must be wheedled or fairly driven into working, who would oppose every benefit she endorsed and whose presence was certain to be dreaded by his family.

Jones junior thrived, a lusty, spirited chap who adored his mother and scowled at his father, seemingly as content when placed behind the pickle keg while customers shuffled in and out as if he had been in the white nursery of his mother's fancy.

When he finished his "eternal crawling" and was standing on tottering, stout legs, having learned that his father's temper was short and his mother nothing less than a kindly saint, the second child, Marian, was born. Again the blowsy midwife took charge of the household whereat Jones and Jones junior rebelled but to no purpose.

"It never pays to be too comfortable," Martha told herself in a spirit of fanatical sacrifice, "I don't think one grows spiritually unless they have to shoulder big responsibilities. I must not complain."

Her books collected dust and her hands became red and rough as she struggled with the two children and tried to believe this was the will of God, a happier lot than most. Besides, her joy lay in the hope that the children would never endure similar conditions.

There was no chance for them to leave the grocery store. In fact, it narrowed to their sole means of support since Jones settled down to be supported. He owned the store but his wife must run it. He had no ambition to seek further.

He was used to "kids around" when the third child arrived in 1888. He even took an interest in her, naming her Patricia because her mother had asked to have her named Sophia. She was his favorite, gay and volatile with a Dresden doll beauty, a contrast to Marian who was a sober, delicate looking little person, distinctly a thinker. Young Jones remained his mother's idol, little tolerated by his father but nevertheless preserving his sense of happiness and a rugged constitution.

In this confining situation Martha toiled—"and was troubled with many things." Shut away from the world she craved, her children became her religion. No task too great if it tended toward their emancipation. From cleaning oil lamps and tending fires, cooking three, sometimes four hearty meals each day, baking for the store, washing and ironing late at night to tending a garden patch and trying to keep her mind receptive for progressive ideas—so Martha struggled. Her daily prayer was but three sentences. "Lord, keep me well. Let us get into our own home. Let my children go to college."

The children grew up despising yet fearing their father, a trifle disrespectful yet pitying their mother. At eight years, Jones' resolve was to be "so rich his mother wouldn't have to lift her finger."

There was too much deception in the Bynight household to make for wholesomeness. The children deceived their father to escape punishment. They deceived their mother to avoid her crying over what

she called "misconduct." She took a violent pride in having them "different from the other young ones in the block." They were bathed twice a week instead of holding by the Saturday night standards. They said their prayers while she listened no matter how tired she might be. They kissed each other goodnight. They learned poems and Bible verses. She tried to give them every advantage of which she was capable. They were imbued with the idea of progress. They knew that keeping a grocery in a poor part of town and having a mother whose hair was untidy was merely the introduction to better things. They were to become rich, famous, gracious of manner. Their father was a stumbling block, to be endured and fooled as to what was taking place. Tiny treats or indulgences, what he would term "gol darned foolishness" were kept from his knowledge. Martha justified it as follows:

"Mother worked extra hard for it while your father played cards and drank beer—I guess God won't mind if we never tell."

The entire burden of existence rested on Martha's willing but abused shoulders from the time of Patricia's birth. Bynight's favorite answer when she appealed to him to make a greater effort was: "You are so much smarter than my mother or me—go on —win the family fortune."

He seemed to enjoy her struggling to meet demands, never sparing of her own resources. In time Martha turned to her son for companionship. Together they weathered the storm. She told him

her hopes and fears, he listening with a graveness worthy of twice his years. Martha did not realize this prevented normal development, that Jones should have been playing with children instead of being huddled on a kitchen chair while Martha worked, telling him of what the future must hold for the family.

Their comradeship irritated his father, he took every possible occasion to punish the boy because he knew it pained his mother. He made him the butt of coarse ridicule in front of people, belittled his efforts and intimidated him in every way he could. He was foolishly indulgent with the girls, particularly Pat.

Jones' first disillusionment came when he discovered grownups were not all they insisted a child should be. He kept the discovery a secret. No need to worry his mother about it. He obeyed his father because he was cowed, as yet brute strength prevented defiance of this idle fellow who made them so wretched. But he bided his time. He never resented the favoritism shown the girls—"I'd rather father took it out on me," he would declare.

"Jones, Jones," Martha would answer, "never mind—just wait and you will get your reward."

Peasant habits acquired from Sophia and her present environment were creeping into Martha's personality. She was ignorant of this—of her sometimes untidy way of eating, her uncouth speech when excited. Just as Sophia had been ground into a physical wreck by dint of never ending work, so

Martha was being ground down—only Martha had a vision which both maddened yet rescued her.

Her attitude towards Jones changed, she was no longer submissive. Since she took charge of both business and family, she took upon herself the proper authority. She had stood by to watch his unfair temper long enough. The harder she worked, the more he loafed. She was unable to inspire him to other than drunken habits. She made no friends save neighbor women, coarse, friendly ceatures who had advised her "to try a rolling pin" and declared she was spoiling her children, "bringing them up too fine."

When Jones was nine a significant event proved Martha's leadership. Having saved his paper route money, Jones bought a postage stamp album, a cheap affair but to his mind a treasure worthy of Midas. Coming upon him unexpectedly, his father demanded the source of the book.

"Bought it with my own money," Jones cringed.

"One dollar," his father read the price mark. "So, that's what you do with your money, you selfish young cub—with your mother and me working to feed you. I've a good notion to tan you until you can't stand—get up here—give the stamps to me, d'ye hear—if there's going to be any collectors in this family it will be me—there," crumpling the stamps into a little ball.

"Oh, pa, I saved the money," he protested, "Mother said I could."

"You're not dealing with your mother," he

snarled, his eyes red with anger, "it's your father and if my word doesn't count, my horsewhip will. I'll learn you to talk back—your own money—you puny little runt with a king's conceit——"

Marian and Pat, playing nearby, crept up to him.

"Mother did say he could," Marian began, "really truly, pa."

"Get out of the way, little busybodies," was the answer, "or you'll find what isn't good for you—come here, boy, take that stamp album and put it on my dresser and stay upstairs until I come—you'll not want to come down for a time, I'm thinking."

Tear blurred, flaming with hatred, Jones obeyed. Marian darted off unseen. Her mother was waiting on a customer. But she knew when she might interrupt. The customer was left waiting while Martha ran up the stairs, colliding with her husband at the landing. He held the whip behind his back but she pointed at it.

"Drop that, you coward."

Jones swore unpleasantly.

Martha opened the door leading to the store, the customer was a willing audience.

"If you touch that child," she said slowly, "for no reason but cussed ugliness, I'll call for help. I'm boss here. I'm not going to stand by and let you do what your temper tells you is fine fun. I let him buy that album, I took fifty cents to get extra stamps, too. If you think you can bulldoze me, you're wrong. I've lived with you too many years not to know you for a coward. As long as you keep in your place, I'll

work to bring up the children. But you can't beat 'em like dogs because you've nothing better to do."

He was silent.

"I know they can hear in the store—I want they should," Martha added, "nothing to be proud of, either. But we had to have a reckoning and it may as well be now. I can get out of here, support my children if you want to turn us out. I'm not afraid —that's the whole battle. Or else you can take yourself out of here as long as you hold a horsewhip for a nine year old boy! God pity such as you."

Jones muttered something about impudence and devilishness but Martha stood guard at the landing. The store bell kept tinkling, more customers were listening. Swearing, Bynight turned and went into the barn. Triumphantly, Martha released her son.

"I'd rather have stood for it," Jones protested, "than to have had those words—they sounded so, mother—and you're all warm and crying. I hate him, hate him," he put his head on her shoulder.

"Never mind, dearie, mother's not going to have things go any worse than she can help," Martha was breathing heavily, she had won a great victory.

The scene made a vital impression on the boy. Wakening the next morning with the spontaneous joy of being alive, he was about to jump from bed when the remembrance of last night's happenings caused him to shiver. This delicate tragedy made Jones resolve that his children should sleep with none but happy hearts, free of dread.

Bynight never mentioned the incident. He even

avoided Jones, speaking to him as little as possible. But six months later the album, now bursting with treasures, was missing and a Swedish boy living two blocks away and whose father had "barrels of money" told Jones that his father had purchased the album from Mr. Bynight.

"My father pay three dollar for it," boasted the Swedish boy, "your father bane say you too young to appre-ci-ate."

Jones never told his mother. It would re-open a wound. She had enough to bear. Pat was impudent and Marian would not wipe the dishes. His father took money from the cash drawer. Moreover, the real pleasure of the album had been dissipated that first day. Jones, too, lived in a visionary future when there would be no father and his mother received her just reward.

CHAPTER VII

In 1898 Martha had a chance to sell the store and put the money into a double house in a modest neighborhood. Her husband was quite willing, the store was a burden and he was now fired with the idea of inventions, cheap patents which should fool the public and make his fortune. As Tilly the cleaning woman said of his proposed musical instrument:

"Sure he must plan to have a body blow at either end simultaneously like while you pick the tune out of the middle with a can opener!"

Bar room loafers could catch his ear, he was always looking for a way to get money without earning it.

Martha paid little heed to his nonsense. She kept the cash drawer down to meagre proportions and had the courage to deny him more. She ordered him about when she chose but as she told her son: "It is more bother to get him to do things than to do them myself—he never does them the right way, seems as if he delighted in doing them the way I didn't want."

Martha's move afforded great satisfaction. She felt their hardest days were ended. Foreigners coming into the store neighborhood had both forced yet

made easy the sale. The double house gave a modest income. Martha planned to do sewing, go out to serve dinners and care for small children afternoons. She decided they would get along as well as they had at the store. Besides, her own family gave a little help. They took the girls on the farm during the moving period and dressed them out, they said, to last a year. The half-sister who had visited Martha and appreciated her struggle, sent furniture for the new home, ponderous walnut it is true but highly acceptable.

Her husband admired Martha's endeavors in his cheap way. He paid her tribute when he was good natured or wanted a loan. Such as: "No use talking, Martha, you can put the top dressing on a lawn as well as the Dunlevy gardener," or "How do you do it all, mother? Sew and cook and order a pack of kids and a worthless husband about—hey? As good looking as the day we met if you'd dress up. Give us a kiss. Oh, have you three dollars that ain't working? This is for something that will benefit all of us—yes, it is—a surefire thing—give it to me and see, take a sporting chance—that's my partner —come on, loosen up—thanks—no, Martha, don't go to lifting anything heavy until Jones comes from school. I guess mother would have been surprised to see us in our own house—and an income besides." Saying which, he would disappear.

Martha found plenty of persons who wanted her services, she made excellent friends as well, people who realized all this woman was undertaking. The

Bynight children were liked, they were unspoiled, eager for knowledge and affectionate. It was a shame about their father, everyone said. Still, the children would profit by his example, that was the way it usually went. They hoped they would repay their mother for all she had done, everyone was certain Jones would—he was devoted now. He had a morning and evening paper route and swept walks and tended furnaces in winter. Sometimes he helped the lamp lighter, getting up by five to do so. He did well in school, his mother coaching him, he was skipping grades so as to reach high school as soon as possible. Marian needed no coaching, she was a born blue stocking whereas Pat idled over lessons and cast her blue eyes on all pretties in sight.

Martha was keenly disturbed when Jones planned to be an artist.

"You will starve, honey," she insisted, "mother will have to hem napkins and make salads until judgment day, if you go trying that."

"But I'm to be a great artist," he insisted.

"You can't tell much as to that," she warned.

"I'll try it—if I'm not great, I'll be something else."

"If a white soul counts, you ought to be great," Martha praised, "and if brains count, Marian will run for the senate. If it is just beauty, Pat will be Queen of the May. I guess I know my own children as well as anybody."

She took great delight in their report cards. Every so often she called on the teachers to tell them

"she had confidence in their methods, she used to teach herself back in Naples, and she knew a teacher saw a child at a closer and more revealing angle than did its parent. She was real glad the children proved satisfactory—if they did not, let her know."

Unconscious of the teacher's pity, Martha would trudge home, clad in her outlandish clothes. Patricia objected to these visits.

"You talk so loud and your nose is red," she said.

Jones gave his sister a cutting glance. "If she talks loud, anyone that listens will be the wiser for it," he insisted.

Marian said nothing.

Martha flushed. "It is better for a little girl to have her mother talk to the teacher than to be in an orphan asylum," yet she was ashamed the child's criticism annoyed her.

There was little dignity or reserve with family affairs. Things were discussed pro and con with no attempt at discretion. The children entered into vigorous debate as to whether it should be a roast of pork or a pot roast for Sunday dinner and added their opinions as to their father's worthlessness with as much authority as did their mother. Mentally theirs was an adult life.

When Jones invited his teacher, Miss Markham, to eat supper, a thrilling event, he experienced his first confusion at his mother's gaucheries.

When he told her Miss Markham was coming, Martha was sweeping off snow from the steps, an old hat of his father's on her tousled head, thick-

boots and a woolen house dress completing the scarecrow effect. She was humming because she was happy. Marian had been one hundred in history and spelling, Pat had not complained at making the beds, her husband was sober and she had made an extra four dollars by an unexpected club luncheon—to say nothing of the broken foods they told her to take home.

"Oh, that's nice, child," she said, "I'll cook a bang up meal. The mayonnaise left from the lunch will help make a real tony salad. I want to have everything apple pie. I'll wash my good napkins out tonight," shaking her broom, "I guess that's clear enough."

"I'll do the rest," Jones offered, "can we have ice cream, too?"

"Yes sir, you can run down for it while I change plates. Let's have a chicken fricassee—I guess she never ate one the way I can fix it."

"I wish father wasn't going to be here," added Jones.

"He'll spruce up and be polite, always is when there's company. He likes a good supper, too. Don't worry—he'll be a credit. I'll begin to talk him into it and maybe I'll train Pat to wait on table."

"What dress will you wear?"

"My brown silk—out of style but splendid material. Nobody knows what I look like, flying around the kitchen most of the time."

"I wish you'd fix your hair pompadour," Jones began but he did not finish. Something told him it

was too much to ask. Pat's beauty and his father's company veneer must suffice for the family culture.

Miss Markham enjoyed the supper and was amused by the family. It proved one of those deadly domestic affairs where the children betray all the household economies. She thought Mr. Bynight quite handsome, his wife an excellent cook but dowdy and the children were dears.

Jones went for the ice cream as planned and claimed the largest portion "because I chased it" and after supper Martha did the dishes in order to let the children profit by Miss Markham's talk on her trip to Europe.

"Jones will tell me about it afterwards," she apologized, "there's a few things I must see to. Before I forget, could you use a bunch of lovely celery? A huckster went through here today and three bunches fell off his cart—I called but he never heard me, so it isn't stealing to keep 'em. They would have frozen in the street. Won't you take one along?"

Jones was embarrassed. To interrupt a talk on Europe by the gift of strayed celery! He was glad when Miss Markham graciously declined and the door closed on his mother and the table of dirty dishes. Neither was her impulsive praise of himself to his liking. He could not forget her naïve description of the kitchen cabinet he had bought for a quarter off a peddler, repainted and put in his room to serve as both bookcase and dresser, how "elegant the flour bin was for soiled clothes and the

spice closets for his school lessons." It took a boy to think up things. And Miss Markham's polite agreement.

After the teacher left, Bynight mimicked her, although he had been a model of flattering politeness in her presence. Jones resented this, as well. He did not understand it was not malicious fun but his father's disguised envy of the woman's breeding, an unworthy method of regretting his own lack of culture.

A great event happened when Jones was twelve years old. Through one of Martha's friends, and patroness as well, he was suggested as an errand boy during spare time at the famous art store of Hannibal Hamlin and Son, a store founded for half a century and dealing in pictures, statuary, antiques and bronzes, oriental wares.

The peculiar feature of the establishment was the fact that the owner and proprietor, son of the founder, was a blind man yet counted authority as to his stock, a man of integrity and unquestioned ability. Blind from childhood, he was endowed with the ability to tell from his finger tips, he declared, as to the quality of a vase, the technique of a painting or the value of a human being.

With neither cane nor guide, he would go through the four floors of his store, stopping to chat, with clerks and customers, fingering new goods and appraising them deciding on the prices for antiques, "enjoying himself" as his friends declared. He was a majestic man, middle aged, with snowy white hair

and dark, vacant eyes unshaded by glasses. His hands were long and slender, shell pink of color. He would put a hand on one's arm as he talked.

"I can see them," he would assert. And his judgments were correct. Living in a great mansion next door to the Dunlevys, Hamlin entered into the social and civic life of the city with unusual spirit. Yet no detail of his business escaped him. No one was hired, no matter what the capacity, but what Mr. Hamlin "saw them."

So when Jones, shaking in his boots at being in this vast, beautiful shop, stood before him, Hamlin rested one hand on Jones' arm as he said:

"From four to six each afternoon, from eight until six on Saturdays. And you like to do errands?"

"Yes, sir," chattered Jones.

"This is a big store—we have a great many wonderful things to sell. Sometimes a jade goddess no bigger than two fingers costs a fortune, a brocade a thousand years old brings many hundreds of dollars. We sometimes show panoramas which take the length of our art gallery. We must have people working for us who like both our ways and our wares. Grow up with the business and become one of us. We only employ those kind of people. When we discover they are not our sort, we let them go. We have no time to scold, we have too many things deserving of praise . . . all right, young Bynight, you can report tomorrow."

He had "seen" Jones.

Jones tore home to tell his mother. She was at a neighbor's house, the woman had died and her relations had written to ask that her things be packed up and forwarded. The neighbors had come to Martha. "Mis' Bynight knows how to pack" they said.

Martha had the few poor things together when Jones came in.

"That's mighty fine news," she said, "you may own the store some day—at any rate, you're stepping pretty wide and handsome."

Jones went home to rejoice all by himself. To work in the store of all stores, surrounded by the beautiful, feast his eyes on pictures and embroideries and be entrusted with some lesser object—such as a package of wall fasteners! What new worlds were opening for him.

When Marian came in, Jones told her.

"My, I'm glad," she confessed, "it is different from being in a grocery store—I wonder where you'll end up with such a start as this?"

"Where will you end up?" asked Jones generously.

"I shall teach," was Marian's prim decision, "never be like mother."

Jones was silent, he could not criticize his idol. Patricia had added herself to the group.

"I shall go on the stage, ride bareback or swing off a trapeze—anything but go to college," was her challenge.

"She is only a baby," Jones told Marian magnanimously.

"But a troub-le-some one," the older little girl answered.

His father heard the news without satisfaction. "That's right, get ahead of your folks and then be ashamed of 'em," he declared, "that is the way it goes. Your ma is bent on it. Going to have you all lily fingered ladies and gentlemen. I don't think it's a good plan, I've a notion to move you all onto a farm and let you sweat a while. Well, if you break anything over to that art store, you can pay for it. Remember that. Working in such a swell place isn't all beer and skittles. I'd rather work in a butcher shop—if you drop anything there, all you got to do is wash off the sawdust and lay it back on the block."

Jones felt nauseated of soul—he realized life was complex. Yet he felt almost culpable for not wanting to be in the butcher shop environment.

By dint of hard work on the part of Jones and his mother with Hannibal Hamlin securing a scholarship for his favorite clerk, 1903 found Jones entering college, a hundred miles distant.

CHAPTER VIII

JONES' going to college was like a mosaic, since to do so comprised intricate and various efforts, sacrifices, prayers, friendly philanthropies—whatnot. Everything had been bent to that one purpose as far as Martha was concerned. Blind to her own hardships, her husband's lack of interest, the girls' problems, Martha toiled and had faith that this was to be.

In the intervening years had come many trials and few rewards. A friction had developed between Martha and her daughters, offset to a degree by Jones' sympathy.

Patricia was hopelessly mundane in her mother's eyes. With taste for neither school nor housework, she developed a love of the fleshpots. To obtain the prettiest clothes and have the best time comprised her ambitions. She flirted as naturally as Marian studied, accepting life as a never ending frolic. Petted by her father and shielded by her admiring brother, Patricia defied her mother, shirking her share of tasks. She was affectionate but shallow, superficially clever and so lovely to look upon that one forgave her any offense.

Martha "bore with her" in old fashioned jargon,

she feared Patricia would bring tragedy upon her butterfly self. Yet Patricia was easier to live with than Marian. Marian was coldly aloof, superior, she had a way of putting people in their places, building up a reserve impossible to overcome. She was a tall, sweetfaced girl with a natural good taste. She spent one-third of the time Patricia used in dressing her brown hair. Patricia's blond curls were waved and frizzed while Marian's was a smooth, glossy coiffure at the nape of her white neck. Patricia wore blue ribbons and a pink dress, imitation jewelry, slippers with grownup heels, as Martha called them, a little makeup as well. There was an amusing sophistication. She had a habit of exaggerating. Her family were poor, no denying that, but they had been rich, she informed her schoolmates and in Europe the Bynights were extremely well connected. She hinted of a possible inheritance —a lovely estate in North Devon—there was no telling but what they might go abroad to live.

Patricia boasted of more beaux for her age than was wholesome. She counted on their presents with a shrewdness which delighted her father and displeased her mother. She went to all school events with some cavalier whereas Marian went with Jones or alone. Patricia regarded her family as beneath her, excepting Jones. Jones was to be her salvation. As soon as he made his fortune he would give Patricia the proper setting. Her attitude as a child was: "If I can't have the best things, I'll take second best but I must have something." She could always find

a new angle for a feather to Jones' delight. He admired his sisters. They did no wrong in his eyes. He thought Patricia beautiful and talented, he wished his mother would not scold because she begged for a piano and pouted when asked to dust.

For all Patricia's vivacious charm, elastic tales of family wealth, it was Marian who won people's esteem. The neighborhood had it that Marian was "elegant" and Patricia was "swell" and young Jones "a wonder."

Marian's was a dignity beyond her years. She resembled her mother when she had been a girl. Marian refused to quarrel with Pat, she merely disapproved of her. Her real world was the world of books and in this she and her brother met on equal ground.

Jones became man of the family long before he was a college freshman. His father deferred to him whereas once he bullied. Jones was consulted before anything was bought, he decided whether or not to raise their tenants' rent, what would be the right Easter hat for Patricia. When he spoke it was with authority, even his mother deferred to his wishes although Jones usually endorsed what he knew his mother wished.

If Patricia lived by frivolity and admiration and Marian dreamed among her books, young Jones found reality to a great extent. He was both blessed and burdened with a family. He longed to be a sculptor yet he must complete a practical education, provide for his sisters.

The æsthetic suroundings of the Hamlin store soothed and temporarily satisfied his longing. He did well in their employ. From errand boy to cash boy during summer vacation, from cash boy to half time clerk during high school days and then whole time clerk in the oriental department during spare time, Jones was learning the stock, watching the buyers and their methods, the psychology of selling and obtaining a training equal only to the training Hamlin himself had received.

The store became his religion, his mother a strayed goddess lodged in the little Elm street home. He adored each beautiful, glowing object, revelled in the pictures, he criticized the pictures to himself. Sometimes Mr. Hamlin would go about the store with young Bynight asking his opinions, sometimes praising, sometimes contradicting his answers.

Once, during a luncheon hour, Jones sold a copper samovar, a sale amounting to sixty dollars. When Hamlin heard of it, he gave Jones a five dollar bonus.

"How did you come to sell it?" he asked, his blind eyes staring over Jones' head.

"It looked as if it would belong in her sort of parlor," the boy said almost shamedly, "I didn't really show her anything else."

"What will you do with that money?"

"Put half in the bank, give half to mother," was his quick reply.

"You've a good mother, haven't you?" he questioned.

"I guess I have," Jones answered, he could hardly wait until he reached home to tell of his good fortune.

When Jones finished high school, second in his class, Hamlin had sent to ask if he cared to go through college.

"If you will work—I'll do the rest," was his promise, "and what do you intend doing—after you've lived down your diploma?"

Jones told of his desire to be a sculptor—only his family would need his immediate assistance.

Hamlin made little comment. He advised Jones to plan on entering the university that autumn, he would have a place in the store during all his vacations. He could wait on table to pay for his board, no doubt, or find other odd jobs, there were a number of things a chap could do if he was at all inclined.

So Jones made ready. Martha had not been able to save but at least she was not in debt. Her husband had spasmodic fits of working, selling cheap jewelry, soliciting for washing machines, distributing handbills! But he never engaged in any concentrated line of action. He talked of the "income" from the other half of their house as if it was sufficient to meet all demands. Sometimes Martha told herself she was blessed in being head of the family, to have depended on her husband's miserliness, had he been self supporting, would have been even less endurable.

She knew no pride where her children were con-

cerned, working at anything which offered. Sometimes she acted as caretaker for houses when people went away, she had a circle of pseudo-friends and benefactors who supplied her with clothes. In this way they were all better dressed than if she had been obliged to purchase them. She was thankful for old furniture as well. Her garden yielded vegetables for the table and her married half sister sent a barrel of apples and one of potatoes each fall. When her father died, she received eight hundred dollars and with this she put some improvements into the double house and raised the rent accordingly. Martha managed! But there was no way to help Jones through college.

This did not worry Jones. He had saved seventy dollars, he would write essays and take all the money prizes, he said this as confidently as if he planned to board a train. It would be the only way his mother and the girls could come visit him. Hitherto, he had given his mother almost all of his wages. He realized the stoppage would mean retrenchment, still, she urged his going. It was reaching her long dreamed of goal.

When Jones reached the university he found the way was not difficult. He knew no shirking from work, he was of splendid mental calibre. Waiting on table paid for his board as Mr. Hamlin suggested. Pumping the chapel organ and sweeping dormitories paid for his room. His clothes would do. He used some money for fees and books, his scholarship would be renewed if his marks merited it. There

were three "plum prizes" as he wrote home. He must capture all of them. Two were for twenty-five dollars each, the essay subjects being Spinoza and Macaulay, one was for a hundred and fifty dollars, the subject to be original.

He wrote his mother to plan on coming to see him at Thanksgiving. He would surely win the first of the prizes. He wrote dutiful weekly accounts of happenings to Mr. Hamlin but remained oblivious to his associates. They labelled him a "poverty shark, a grind" and let him alone. A fraternity was beyond his pocketbook, so were the monthly hops. He did not realize that to know how to play was a greater art than to know how to work, that former art being one of the greatest benefits a university experience can bestow.

Only his professors delighted in him. They often forgot that their duty was to the man of dead level intelligence and not the most brilliant man in the class room. They talked up to Jones which also removed him from the fellowship of his classmates.

He was shy regarding girls, never attending social affairs and coming in contact with them but rarely. Once, when a well meaning professor asked him to tea and his three daughters presented themselves as entertainers, Jones' confusion was so great the professor took pity upon him and steered him into his study to converse on the soothing topic of beetles while the girls giggled in the offing over his clumsy manners.

Jones won the prize for his essay on Macaulay.

So Martha spent Thanksgiving with him. The family demurred at her going, no one could cook as good a dinner as Martha and she also lost the chance to serve a Thanksgiving eve supper party. Her husband pronounced it "more foolishness" although he boasted to his cronies about "my son in college."

But Martha in a pumpkin colored dress and an old golf cape, a basket of homemade goodies for her boy, boarded the train for the first time away from Cornwall since her marriage.

The hardships of her married life were as nothing in comparison with this joy. Not only was she visiting her son at his college, but he was paying expenses by having taken an essay prize! Could any hero be greater? She was even tolerant of her husband as the train jolted her away from her narrowed environment, she planned to buy Pat a belt and Marian a little book, she was certain she could manage it. How pleased Jones would be when he saw the Thanksgiving feast—even prize winners do not scorn roasted chicken and mince pie.

When Jones introduced his mother to the faculty members, he was conscious of a sense of shame. In superficial manner he mentally criticized her dress, bromidic remarks. He could not tell an indifferent world the intimate story of her greater mother heart and broad visioned brain. That it was because she did the drudgery that he would be the savant!

True, Jones was waiting on table and sweeping floors, denied social activities but Jones was different

from his mother in some miraculous fashion just as Martha had been different from Sophia who had suffered by Martha's superiority.

It was the American way of things, Jones told himself as he scuttled Martha to his room to "appreciate her all alone, without unfair contrasts" as he reasoned. The faculty had been courteous, smiling at her attempted bon mots and answering her inquiries. They appreciated young Bynight's position.

Martha told Jones he had changed, he had a "splendid air about him—she knew Mr. Hamlin would be delighted." She hoped he would win the prize for the Spinoza essay, he could come home for Christmas and work in the store for ten days, it would more than pay him. And if he should win the hundred and fifty dollar prize—dearie me——

"I'll go west for the summer, earn my way somehow," he interrupted. "I want to see the painted desert."

Martha was aghast. She had expected him to be in her charge during the summer. But she made no protest, she was too exalted and somewhat awed to have done so. Besides, she became cursed with an unromantic malady—an ulcerated tooth which ruined her visit. It also got on Jones' nerves. Martha seemed such a pitiful, nervous faced little soul with a swollen right jaw and weary eyes, trying hard not to have him irritated by her distress. She had refused to see a dentist.

"I've gone through worse times than this," she told him, "dear me, when Marian was a baby and

you just a toddler, I had two such teeth—and the store to wait on, besides. Here I can lay down and rest, look at my dear boy. Let's hear what you've written about Spinoza—is that the way to say it? I'll forget any toothache—don't you worry."

So Jones read his first draft with Martha applauding, holding a warm flannel to her cheek. Then Jones had to go wait table. Martha and he were to picnic lunch in his room afterwards. While he was away, Martha, toothache or no toothache, began to put his room in order. It had worried her from the moment she had seen it. She beat the rug, regardless of the holiday and amused spectators, cleaned the windows and dusted the shabby furnishings, pausing to look over the second hand text books and peek at his halfway prepared lessons. She cleaned that room in the same reverent spirit one would clean a temple, it was consecrated to her mind. It typified her goal—all she had worked for, hoped might come to pass. She forgot her toothache and the untidiness of her appearance.

Jones was pleased yet dismayed, when he found what she had done; he thanked her earnestly and then ate up the greater share of the lunch, telling of his future plans!

Martha slept in a hotel that night. The next day, they walked and talked together and at sunset, Jones put her on the train, glad she had gone. He hated himself for his embarrassment for surely his mother was a "workman who needeth not to be ashamed!"

Poor muddled Jones, he pledged himself he would never marry but give this mother the allegiance and love she deserved, he would become so rich and famous that Madame Grundy would pay her respect, grudging as it might be. He felt absurdly guilty.

He finished the Spinoza essay while visualizing Martha's devoted shabby self. He must repay, repay, repay!

CHAPTER IX

JONES won the Spinoza prize, but when word came the hundred and fifty dollars was to be awarded to one Jones Bynight for his essay on Ideals, Patricia summed up the situation by her exclamation of:

"All hail the racket! We may wear silk foundations yet!"

In June, Hamlin arranged for Jones' trip to Arizona. He sent him as semi-valet, semi-secretary to a party of artists going out to sketch. For nine, never-to-be-forgotten weeks, Jones lived in the desert, became imbued with the spirit of freedom realizing dimly his asocial drifting, that he must renounce a creative career because of his family's financial stress. These realizations had their compensations. Living on top of the oldest civilization in the world—the painted desert—visions were bound to come. When he lay down to sleep on the very brink of eternity, wonderful thought children were born of that crumbled wisdom and his crude imagination. He planned for an art magazine which should make America stand for something else in the eyes of critics other than a nation productive of fountain pens and breakfast foods. He planned for a home of his own, Marian's education,

Pat's happiness, he, too, felt tolerant of his father, laughed tenderly at his false sense of pride regarding his mother. He was given a sense of humor.

Yet when he returned, the house seemed stuffy, his mother worn and frail. Patricia's appearance was overdone and Marian on the road to being a bookworm. He regarded his father as a failure, deserving of little consideration. It was a relief to return to college, nor did he come home until the following June. Then he set to work at the store, helping Marian get off to a woman's college that fall. He knew Marian would want to remain away, not risk comparisons but stay aloof until she was in a position to help her family, not criticize them.

Pat refused to consider college. Martha's present worry was that she would be an actress. Her father said she was too pretty not to be married. Jones reserved decision.

"When you want things," he ordered, "tell me. I'll always get them if I can and if I can't, be patient. But don't plague mother. Think of all she has done. Here is Marian gone—only father and you left. Poor dad, he'll never get a second wind. It will do you good to be denied."

"I'm so tired of being poor," Pat protested, "I haven't booky brains. Mother is so narrow—she cries if I contradict her. She has worked so hard and been so disappointed in dad she can't laugh at anything. Of course she's salt of the earth—but trying. You're away and the horrid little jars don't affect you. Besides, you're the favorite."

"Everyone has a time of sacrifice," her told her soberly, "even old China had its day when all retrenched. Jade panels were replaced by plain bamboo and the son of heaven wore but linen. Being poor will never hurt you."

This meant nothing to Pat when she wanted a gay plaid dress and her mother said: "Pat sleeps late, she's afraid her sleep will be frosted if she gets up any earlier."

"We can't do just as she says," she insisted, "we are up and coming but her day is done. If it sounds cruel, I'm sorry but it is the truth—we were brought up to tell the truth, kindly remember."

Up and coming! Jones re-echoed the phrase. How exactly had his sister voiced the situation in her careless fashion. He recalled stories of his thrifty German grandmother, his cockney grandfather, the marriage in the lion's cage! His sisters and he were the third generation—who could say to what heights they would attain? If they failed to reach the heights, their children would—the rise was inevitable, possibly delayed for a generation or so. His mother, static and orthodox, was the real "yeast" of the situation. Martha-in-the-middle bridging the old and new. In reality, Martha was suffering the birth pangs of the Bynight aristocracy!

Jones was reverent when next he saw her, she was pathetically flattered—such a contrast to Marian's aloofness or Pat's impertinence.

. . . . . .

The Easter recess before Jones' graduation still found the family in the double house with Martha-in-the-middle keeping the domestic machinery moving.

The house interiors showed a decided change in atmosphere. Marian, now a college junior, seldom home due to an opportunity to coach during vacations, had brought this about somewhat. But it was Jones who furnished the money. If anyone wished something contrary to Martha's policies, it was Jones who won the day.

"Mother will do anything Jones wants her to," complained the girls.

"She can't say no to the boy," grumbled his father.

The furniture was now a cheap grade of mission variety. The pictures Martha had cherished were missing and save for a good print or engraving nothing took their place on the buff tinted walls. There were not enough cases to hold the shabby books so they overflowed onto the tables. Braided rugs and newly painted floors had supplanted the body brussels. Scrim curtains instead of ancient and ornate affairs were at the windows and even glass candlesticks with silk shades rested on the small sideboard. But no one had changed Mother's room, it was regarded as foreign territory.

"She likes old things," Jones argued, "she doesn't mind our changing everything else. When we move from here, we'll furnish her room completely. But let's don't disturb her now."

When the children clubbed together to wire the house with electricity, Martha protested the added expense of doing her room.

"Jones' student lamp gives the soft light I need," she declared. "Besides, I like using it, he studied with it so long. I'd feel as if I had parted with an old friend. As long as I'm the one to clean it, I think it might be allowed to stay."

Patricia was now proud to have her friends call, seeing that her parents obediently retired at the sound of the bell. Yet she had made no effort to bring this to pass.

"Everyone needs an audience," she defended when Marian accused her for lacking interest, "I'm the audience. You two supply the acts. Of course I like the new things but I'm no grubber. The more you study, the less sense of humor you seem to have, sister mine. I wouldn't wear glasses like yours if I had to be an illiterate! It is all right for Jones but never for a girl. I'll do something someday that will make you all proud. Wait until I marry my millionaire and put you on easy street—I just have to spend all my time now in bringing that to pass."

Martha sighed and lifted her eyebrows whenever Pat's name was mentioned, she seemed an alien, this beautiful girl who was dawdling through high school only because she was leading lady in most of the plays.

The Bynights had a polylot collection of friends some of them decidedly de trop these days. There

were the old neighbors, goodhearted, working people who had lived about the grocery store. They came to see Martha who welcomed them even though her children made them feel ill at ease. There were occasional visitors from Naples, country folk who remembered Martha and considered she had done "real well" with two children in college and another too pretty to be real and a husband, who although an idler was at least submissive and gave Martha full sway.

Then there were the present day neighbors, rather envious, inquisitve folks who enjoyed the details of Jones' college life and commented on Pat's beaux. Marian seemed to win approval, she was so quiet in manner, neither attracting nor antagonizing. Besides these, were the individual friends. Hannibal Hamlin, Jones' patron, favorite ex-teachers of both Marian and Jones, rich persons who employed Martha and recognized her worth, the minister who dedeplored the tendency of the young Bynights to be anything but orthodox. There was the brusque family doctor, a source of comfort and confession during dark days, any number of interesting personalities were drawn to this busy, struggling woman determined her children should reap her reward.

Her husband knew "characters" so Martha said, no-good idlers who loafed while someone else worked to keep them. But he seldom brought them to the house, or if he did they went to the back where there was a shed with chairs.

The children made it plain that since their father

had "laid down on his job" to say nothing of having tyrannized in early days, he was to have nothing to say about household affairs. Nor was he to clutter up the home with his kind.

Bynight had become a silent, pale faced man these last years, regarding Martha with a fearful admiration. He treated her with respect since he knew she had an ardent champion in the person of her son. Martha had developed a shrewish tendency where her husband was concerned, she asked nothing of him but she showed him no interest, he was merely her husband, a veritable old man of the sea. He was uncomfortable in the family life, he could not comprehend the things they were attempting. So he kept his opinions to himself or else mumbled them to his companions. His three meals, beer money, a pipe and a mongrel dog at his heels were his essentials. The former swashbuckling Bynight had completely vanished. With moody eyes he watched his family climb. Whenever he asked Martha for money he adopted an apologetic air. Whenever he made money at some odd job or in a card game, he became amusingly dignified and secretive. He disapproved of the family excepting Patricia. He fully expected she would marry the millionaire of which she glibly chattered.

CHAPTER X

MARIAN was not home for this Easter vacation but Jones arrived ahead of the expected time, being more than caught up with his classes. He was to work at the store during his stay and he had been keen to be in time for a loan exhibit of statuary.

"Your father isn't well," was his mother's greeting, "he sleeps most of the time. I'm glad you've come. Patricia is such a will o' the wisp. You look splendid—my, it's good to see you."

Despite the illness, Martha had his room spotless and had cooked his favorite dishes.

"I hate to have you at the store," she objected, "I'll only get a glimpse of you. Still, you'll be sleeping under my roof and eating my meals and that means a lot. Your father is on the lounge in the dining room. I can't get him to bed, he's like a fretful child. Somehow he makes me feel sorry. Patricia is out with Owen Davis, her latest affair. I'm sure I don't know where she will fetch up—just imagine, she is wearing as few clothes as possible so as to look slinky. Don't you call that downright wicked? Even worse than face paint."

Bustling around while she helped him unpack, Martha unburdened her mind of the household

details. The roof leaked, she had mended it herself with tar paper. Patricia had bought a shell pink chiffon dress, one of those things capable of preserving every illusion woman ever forced man to believe. She had worn it to interview the manager of the local stock company in hopes of getting taken on—wasn't that distressing? It seems the manager offered to the most popular girl a week as leading woman, during which the less fortunate flappers would give box parties and have teas behind the stage, so on! Patricia had won the position. Martha was proud in spite of herself. But this Owen Davis, a spoiled prig of twenty-one with entirely too much pin money, persuaded her not to accept. Said he could not bear to see her behind the vulgar footlights and Patricia had weakly succumbed to his wishes. As long as she had gotten the position, Martha really wanted her to accept—it would have paid for the foolish dress and perhaps disillusioned her as to a stage career. But one could never count on Patricia.

Jones sat on the edge of his bed and made his mother occupy the one easy chair. In turn, he told the intimate details of his life which a letter cannot convey. For hours these two, blissfully unconscious of the world without, mutually praised and cheered.

"I feel young again," Martha said as the clock warned her to stop, "I guess your dad is awake, maybe he's hungry. I've got broth on for him."

"You're the best mother in the world," Jones kissed her, "wait until I repay you."

"You have now," she stroked his hair fondly, "you give me the big reason to live and keep on struggling."

"As you give me," he reminded.

"Your father, the girls, the tenants, the work—it all seems so inconsequential when I think of your future. It is worth everything to have such a son. How you've come on," she frowned as if remembering something unpleasant.

"What is troubling?" he demanded, "I'll go over the roof myself, make father go to bed and tell the tenants they must mend their own broken panes. Any more jobs for a struggling student?" His keen gray eyes studied her face. He was noting that she stooped and her hair had grayed while her eyes had a tired fierceness except when she smiled. She wore an unbecoming brown wool thing, an apron shielding the skirt. Her shoes were old, one of the laces had broken and been roughly tied. She was apt to scuff her feet when she walked and her wedding ring, now broad and out of fashion, was scratched, it emphasized the roughness of her hands.

He went on: "I think we are out of the woods, don't you? It's been tough sledding but you never faltered. I'll be finished in June and then watch me. Two years at the store and then to Paris to study. I'll take you with me for my mentor and inspiration. Pat will be married and Marian teaching, we'll leave father to look after the pantry shelves. But first, we must move into better but smaller quarters. Someday I'm going to build a wood lodge

just outside of town and you'll preside over it, your hair will be silvery then and you'll wear soft lavender gowns——"

She held up her hands in protest, flushing happily. "Dear me, you are the dreamer! I guess I'll be content if you ever get to Paris. It seems to me I've a lot to be glad of now. You never plan on being married," she hesitated a trifle, "you're a hermit. Everyone mentions it. Don't you know girls or don't you want to know them?"

"I don't want to," he answered truthfully, "I never think of it—I haven't time. I leave that for fellows with money. Of course I like nice girls but there's lots of time to become interested in any one of them. I don't believe in early marriages—look at yourself—wouldn't you have done better to have waited?"

Her eyes were black with unexplainable emotion. "I wanted you," she told him, "so I don't regret it. Only sometimes I'm so tired from work that it frightens me. It makes me dull of brain—I'm not up to you children and I feel awkward with your friends. I'm out of step—but as long as you are in it, I shouldn't mind. I'm more worried about your father at the present—I don't like the way he looks. I know he was not kind or satisfactory—I've not forgotten—but he is our father and maybe there is some excuse we haven't figured out. Last night when he moaned in his sleep, I wondered if the way his folks struggled to come up in the world hadn't left him sort of helpless, he had to have

everything done for him. He just held the place they made so as to give you children a good jumping up spot. Perhaps that's foolish—but it's worth thinking of when we are cross with him. I think I hear him stirring now," she went downstairs, Jones following.

He found his father a tired child, pathetically docile. Jones sent for a doctor who told them he was puzzled as to his patient's condition, he advised them not to be startled at what might happen. They debated sending for Marian.

But she would be of no help, even if death came, it would be an additional expense and would seem a mere conventional detail, as it would to dress in mourning or indulge in an elaborate funeral.

"If this is to be I'm glad it was your vacation time," Martha said, "it won't break into lessons."

Oddly, this jarred on the boy. Removed as he was from his father's sphere, he disapproved of slavish interest which begrudged even death's appearance at any save a convenient time. His mother's love was both wonderful and terrible.

On Easter Sunday Bynight died. He slept away with Martha beside him. The night before he had said unexpectedly:

"Am I going to die?"

"Course not," Martha answered promptly.

"You're wrong for once, mother," his restless eyes searching the room, "it is midnight, ain't it?"

"Just about."

"Children home?"

She nodded. "Do you want them?"

"It's not worth waking them."

"Jones is in the parlor—he thought you might like him around."

"Then I'm pretty bad," Bynight whispered.

Martha called Jones.

"Marian ain't home, is she?" he asked as Jones came near.

"She's away at college, sir."

"So she is—my head's not clear. I guess my brains never worked enough—well, I'm going to step out, boy. None of you will mind. I've been in the way long enough—" one clawlike hand reached for Martha's, she was crying as she knelt beside him.

"S-s-sh," she said tenderly, "just try to rest."

"I'll rest," he promised, "but let me say it out. You've been fine to me, Martha, so you were to mother. It wasn't easy either. I never understood until lately. There comes a time when it is too late, young Jones, remember that—be good to her. Never let anybody hurt her. And Pat will come out fine, only be patient—she ain't enough like me to spoil her. Marian's fine, too—all fine—Martha—pretty as spring she was—well, here's where the old man steps aside—" He was not conscious again.

CHAPTER XI

They experienced relief after the funeral with its agony of curious callers. Jones was head of the family in name as well as position. Their attitude towards the dead man was one of gentle forgetfulness. They held no grudges, likewise they cherished no regrets. Jones returned to college for his last term and Patricia wore her mourning with a coquettish air while Martha felt renewed courage. As her mother-in-law's death seemed to release her from bondage, so did her husband's passing.

Martha and Patricia were to attend Jones' graduation, Jones providing the money. But when the day arrived, Hannibal Hamlin confronted Jones in their stead.

A family crisis prevented the others from doing so. Two days previous Patricia eloped with Owen Davis whose mother joined with Martha in denouncing the young couple. Completely shocked and angered, Martha refused to make the journey. In a state of frantic disappointment, she appealed to Mr. Hamlin. Must her son, an honor man, be alone at his graduation? Whereupon Mr. Hamlin comforted her by telling her he had intended being present all along, that she must remember life was noth-

ing if not three-fourths tolerance and one-fourth sense of humor. If her daughter had eloped, it was no criminal offense. Somewhat mollified, Martha awaited Jones' return.

Little she dreamed that Jones experienced a certain relief at her absence. He hardly acknowledged this to himself. As he watched Mr. Hamlin's admirable manner, his graceful savoir faire, the deference with which he was treated on all sides, Jones rejoiced that he had not been a witness to the gentle snubs which would have been his mother's lot.

She would have talked of homely, needful things, told discomforting details of his life, repeatedly referred to her proud days as teacher of the Naples school, she would have waxed sentimental, certainly betraying the "being troubled with many things." Careless of appearance and unblushingly proud of her son, Martha would have proved a sad contrast with these gentle people who met on equal grounds.

Instead of listening to the sermon, Jones argued the situation. Why was there such a telling difference? What comprised the line of demarcation? Would it ever be otherwise? Why should she who served and sacrificed suffer from surface comparisons? She who met each mental and physical demand because of her spiritual purpose and yet became an alien in the very world into which she had marshalled her children!

He came to no conclusion. He was ashamed of his arguing. Paramount in his thoughts was the fact that it had been Martha's wish that he so

regard life as to consider her own sort impossible!

Now that Patricia had eloped, he dreaded his mother's torrent of abuse—although he did not blame her. But he must stand by both his sister and mother, meet whatever extra demands might be made. It was well he had finished college and was young and strong. He must not falter in his duty. Yet he was glad that he could introduce Hannibal Hamlin as his guest, that his precious, shabby mother was waiting at home. What a paradoxical cuss he was!

Hamlin and his secretary left immediately after the exercises to go on to New York.

"The Dunlevy firm has failed—and badly, too," Hamlin explained, "I want to see what can be done about it—my wife is a distant cousin, you may remember. I won't be back before Monday but I shall expect you to come to the house—say Tuesday evening at half after eight. I have something to talk over."

His hand rested on Jones' eager arm, his blind eyes looking far beyond his head. What he was "seeing" only he could tell. What he had "seen" when Martha unceremoniously visited him was also his secret.

"Remember, there is always less profit on good things than on cheap ones," was his somewhat mysterious remark, "your mother has chosen the good things—and must take the consequences. Until Tuesday—and you've done better than I ever expected."

Jones tried to thank him, he was always self-conscious in his presence. Never before had Jones been asked to his house. He regarded it as an important mission, flattered at the prospect. Momentarily, he forgot Patricia's elopement, his mother's dismay.

Martha had waited with pent up emotion until her son arrived. Unknowingly, she enjoyed the martyrdom of not attending his graduation. The neighbors' sympathy and their disapproval of Pat had not been altogether unpleasing.

Patricia had sent a messenger with a note, telling of her marriage and asking her mother's forgiveness. She and Owen were at the best hotel in town, Owen having dispatched a like missive to his mother, a snobbish widow with considerable means.

Owen's mother decided to have nothing to do with them. She was disgraced, she refused to see Patricia or have communication with her son. He would soon tire of Patricia and then she would take him back. He had an income of fifty dollars a month so they would not starve. She did not realize that it was due to her training that Owen could not earn a living. He had been plucked twice at college and then made a pretense at learning the electrical business which satisfied his mother. She had been on the point of starting him in his own shop. Ever since her husband's death, Mrs. Davis had lived at a fashionable family hotel, whereby her son developed accordingly.

Of course she blamed Patricia and of course

Martha blamed Owen and his idle, selfish mother. Jones blamed no one but just wished to heaven they had been above board. This estranged Patricia and her mother. He knew beforehand the superior attitude Marian would assume. He must be the peacemaker, persuade Martha to see Patricia's side, make Owen settle down and support his wife, stop Marian's aloof disapproval and have a verbal combat with Mrs. Davis senior. After which, he would see what was to be done about his own career. He knew he had talent as an art student—but he also knew mere talent would not suffice.

"I had a dream," Martha began plaintively as soon as Jones was in the house, "on the night Pat ran off. A horrid nightmare such as I seldom have—your father was in it, he warned me and then Pat mocked me and I thought you were angry. You finally put me out of my own home. I woke with a start and went into her room but she had gone—silly, romantic girl. It was too late to stop them, they went to Canada and were married by some renegade parson. They came back and thought we would fall on their necks. He is a worthless creature—like his mother. People say she wants to remarry—a great, painted doll she is, playing cards and gossiping all day long—I've seen her. Of course she considers herself worlds above the Bynights—but not when she sees you! I went to Mr. Hamlin because I was so upset, I just couldn't come. (You can use the money to buy yourself a present from me, that's one comfort.) Mr. Hamlin told me he

had planned on going all along. He thought me an excitable old woman, I guess. I suppose I bored him. Well, it isn't every day that a woman's daughter runs off with a wastling and her son graduates from college. I've lived on the hope of your graduating ever since you were born," she began to cry.

Jones took her in his arms. He felt unfairly old, already the carefree college atmosphere was fading. "Come, we aren't going to let this break us up, are we? Remember, we have each other."

"You never know how much you have anyone these days," she protested, "I'm afraid I'm bitter. Oh, Jones, I try to stay sweet at heart and be a gentlewoman but sometimes I'm so tired I'm nothing but an old scold, useful in the kitchen. It has been such a long time of waiting for your success and my Indian summer——"

"Now it has come true," he soothed, "here I am, six feet one and at your service. Ready to run a shoestring into a fortune as likely as not. I've always stayed with you mother, I always will. I can hardly call anyone my friend. I'm quite alone, too, if you will only think."

She smiled. "So you are, so you are," she murmured contentedly.

"But since we have each other, neither of us are alone yet we spend good time mooning and bemoaning what? Suppose the world is a little topsy turvy—with little girls wearing lavendar sashes and grandmothers having pink ribbons on their caps—it need

not concern us. We have everything to look forward to—Marian is a fine girl, true blue. Pat is all right —remember what father said—that 'she hasn't enough of me in her to spoil her'—she is getting experience instead of a book education, I'm not sure but what it is quite as sensible. Marian will have to have her experience later. We all come to it. If this marriage ends in a crash, let Pat prove that she can emerge from it. Perhaps it won't, we'll forget hard feelings and use the money you had for your railroad fare to buy the young couple a present. If Owen's mother does not like us—we won't take to mourning over it. But my house is always my sisters' —never shall a door close on them no matter what," without realizing, it had become Jones' house and Martha admiringly agreed.

After Jones was alone, his thoughts turned to the promised interview with Mr. Hamlin. It served as antidote to Patricia's marriage and his mother's childish disappointment.

CHAPTER XII

FROM the vine hung loggia with its cactus urns flanking the entrance and making gay lines of color to the exquisite drawing room of the Hamlin mansion there was nothing but treats to the eye, although the owner and designer of all this beauty was blind.

So Jones thought as he waited to be admitted. He alone knew how the blind man was capable of appreciation, how he "saw" every blooming flower, every carved line of his figurines. His wife, a bonbon type of beauty with a two fingered habit of shaking hands, was concerned with the cost of the place, that it furnished an ornate background for her charms and mundane entertainments.

She was going out as Jones entered, a swirl of sea green tulle fairly dripping with crystal beads.

"Good evening, Jones," she said in her shrill, sweet voice, "Mr. Hamlin is waiting in the drawing room."

His secretary showed him within. The great room more than met his expectations. It stimulated and soothed, banished the uncomfortable home situation. There were huge arm chairs in black, green and lavender brocades, rose taffeta hangings, an

elaborate marble mantel, golden rugs of Chinese workmanship covering the floor and a profusion of fussy Queen Anne needlework.

The room contained Mr. Hamlin's three favorite pictures. A portrait study of a wistful child in purple plaid against a cold green background hung over the mantel. At the opposite end of the room was Mrs. Hamlin's gay self painted in a butter colored chiffon to match her hair, and the third was a marine, green waves breaking over bleak rocks and tossing up heavy spray.

In a chair facing this last Mr. Hamlin was sitting reading some novel in the Braille method, the clumsy book slipping off his knees.

"Sit near me," he ordered, "I forgot an engagement with Mrs. Hamlin when I asked you to come. I must join her in an hour, so we'll talk without introduction. What do you propose to do now you've finished college?"

"Study art," Jones answered.

The blind man shook his head.

"I think I know all the struggle it will mean," Jones added.

"You must abandon any such idea," he ordered just as he had told Jones where to sit. "You haven't the personal freedom to permit such a career. Your mother and sisters—what of them? You may be a worker as well as a dreamer but that won't help you out of the box. You must comfort yourself that all is art whether of the pot or pallette, forge ahead in the thing which will give you the best and

surest returns. You are no genius—I tell you so frankly. I've 'seen' in your work possibilities, kept closer track than you may have imagined. You have talent, rich appreciation, the ability to concentrate but not the divine fire, that strange and wonderful something needed to make an artist. You would do acceptable work if you had endless study and encouragement but that would be all. Your duty lies in other directions. What of the store?"

"It has been my inspiration," he felt helpless to explain. He was looking at himself in an opposite mirror—what a huge, ungainly person! His was a dark, powerful face with the high, calm forehead offset by a shock of stubborn black hair. Somehow he felt a mongrel being as he sat listening to the blind man and staring at his own image. Even his hands which tapered artistically possessed practical artisan thumbs and their color was that mottled, healthy tint of a child's.

He hardly heard what Mr. Hamlin was saying. "It is always a question as to how far one dares interfere with another's destiny—but in this case I shall chance it. Do you realize you are the one person I want to have the business when I'm through? Have you ever suspected it? It is a business I hoped to have my sons carry on but no children came to us. The Dunlevy's children don't interest me. I have watched your work from the day you began toting bundles until now when you're fired with an unwise desire. You are needed to carry on the business—not immediately, perhaps, but ulti-

mately you must be owner. Not only do you know the opportunity it affords but you know the store as no one else knows it—from the basement with its unpacked porcelains to the Puvis de Chavannes drawings on silk and our delicate Whistlers in the gallery. The man who directs that concern must have the soul of an artist and the brain of an artisan —you are the man. I, too, would have chosen to wield a brush": he tapped his sightless eyes meaningly, "just as civilization is a state of mind—the realizing of ideals—so is being an artist. I could not realize that state due to my physical defect —you cannot do so because of personal obligations . . . Claxton, head of the oriental department, is retiring the first of the month—report tomorrow under him and be ready to take his place. Sometime I'll send you to the far east to buy. Some day you will find yourself general manager—later on, you'll buy the business from my estate. Well—is it a bargain? I believe that as you cheapen labor so you cheapen souls, I won't be a party to either. You'll start with a fair salary and a percentage on your sales. You know I'll keep my word even if I do lose my temper."

Jones knew what he must answer.

During the somewhat abrupt speech, he had been making a telling decision. Here was the chance to do for his family all he had pledged to do yet remain in a congenial atmosphere. Hamlin was right, he would only prove a mediocre artist, therefore it was better he became a super-artisan.

"I'll report, sir," standing up and holding out his hand, "and I'll prove worthy."

Hamlin's sightless eyes closed for a moment. Then he looked beyond Jones' shaggy head to ask politely concerning Patricia's marriage, was it such a bad thing, after all? Perhaps his mother was hasty in her decision.

"It was not what mother planned on, that was half the battle," Jones admitted, "work has narrowed her ideas, it is hard to adapt herself to changes. I don't know Owen—he may true up."

"You can't tell. I remember my own honeymoon to the Sandwich Islands," Hamlin chuckled, "we reached there to find a revolution in progress, it was to be the Sandwich Islands for the Sandwich Islanders—and a massacre of foreigners. Quite a welcome for my bride. We sat up all night awaiting the worst and in the morning tiptoed out to accost the clerk and ask when the blow was to fall. His nonchalant reply was they had decided to abandon the massacre in favor of a native feast and we might go out and buy souvenirs with a gladsome heart. That served me a good turn—I never expect the way a thing starts will indicate the way it may finish. Remember that."

"I'll try," Jones said appreciatively.

"Any plans for your own romance?" the sightless eyes seemed penetrating, uncomfortably keen.

"None," was the emphatic reply, "I haven't time for romance."

Hamlin laid a hand on his arm, "seeing" his

thoughts. "A rash statement, young man—don't make them unless you're recommending a purchase of one of our antiques!"

Outside, Jones glanced at the Dunlevy home, wondering whimsically just which part of it his grandfather builded. A for sale sign was on the veranda, the Dunlevy finances being hopelessly on the wane.

He went home, eager to reassure his mother that his career was settled, he was manager of the oriental department. He knew his family would rejoice. They would not analyze their personal interest, they would call it "a splendid start"—so it was. Yet he was lonely this fragrant June night as he walked to the Elm street house.

He longed for what he called "nonsense," he would have liked to dance with pretty girls and pay them trite compliments. He did not want to share his thoughts with his mother.

He planned on moving into an apartment, selling the double house which had been twice mortgaged. The manager of a department at the Hamlin store could not live in such an environment. Besides, there would be only his mother and himself, the house necessitated too much work. And in moving he would be able to refurnish to please himself, without jarring his mother's sense of economy and fitness.

Martha was delighted. She rejoiced because of Jones' devotion as well as the lessening of financial pressure, because he was toiling in the same steady

way she had done, narrowed in interests, removed from the world.

Although she would not have admitted it, she was glad Marian chose to stay away and that Pat was married. She saw no wrong in monopolizing her son. She had done everything for him and she still did everything he asked of her. Therefore, he was her own. The girls were her own, too, but Jones was different!

Marian had an excellent chance to coach during the summer and Martha had written her to accept by all means. Jones made her so happy, he was very generous. She had always cherished the hope of his being an important factor in the art store and now he was. Making a remarkable success, too, his salary was nothing compared to his commissions. He not only knew what people wanted but how to convince them of this fact.

Wasn't Marian amazed to know the double house was sold and they were moving into a nice apartment, it seemed strange to have polished floors and a janitor to tend to the heat. Jones wanted her to be very lazy, he bought her all sorts of clothes and had her go to a hair dresser. He even hinted of a fur coat but she would not permit such an extravagance. He had completely refurnished. In splendid taste—although not the way she would have done. They only had five rooms and a kitchenette and she would be able to do all the work, Jones must save his money for these were his best years, one could never tell what might lay ahead in the way of illness or

adversity! She was glad Marian appreciated him. The check she enclosed Jones sent because he had sold a bronze temple god and received a large bonus and instead of spending it on himself or a stranger, he wanted his sister to benefit. Jones was evidently not the marrying kind. He had too much sense to consider it just now. (Blind, happy Martha). He realized he must make his fortune and improve his business opportunities.

As for Pat! Martha's mother heart forbade her being stern after Pat wept on her shoulder and declared she could never be happy if her mother still disapproved. In strong terms of denouncement, Martha wrote Marian her opinions of Owen and his mother. But that she tried to make the best out of what she feared would be the worst. Jones had helped Owen start an electrical shop in Burlington, a hundred miles distant. Since Owen's mother refused to speak to Pat or aid her son, it was better they went out of town to work out their own problems. She would visit them—when Jones could spare her, his interests came first. She closed the almost tiresome account of family detail by telling Marian she was certain Jones would help her to a post-graduate year if that was her wish.

CHAPTER XIII

JONES won out about the new furnishings even to having candlesticks at either end of the mantel and a painting of the Carmel mission set into the wall. There were crouching dragons for fire irons and a profusion of teakwood chairs and a table, silver gray hangings and small rugs upon which Martha invariably slipped. She felt "strange." She missed her hodge podge of walnut, golden oak and mission furniture, shabby carpets and handmade bookshelves, the homey, homely ornaments valued because of initial associations.

But when Martha sold the fur coat Jones proudly bought her—her first fur coat and his ulster slightly worn, he became resentful. He recalled that Van Dyke taught the English aristocracy how it ought to look but he was doubtful if Van Dyke could have done likewise regarding his mother.

Foolishly he had lied about the original cost, since it would have distressed Martha. When she confided the supposed cost of the coat to an amused but malicious neighbor, the neighbor promptly offered to buy it and add twenty-five dollars to the price. Martha then felt it her duty to retrieve Jones' money and have some to spare.

"I wouldn't feel comfortable wearing it, bless his heart for thinking of me—but I'm not a bit sorry to sell," she had declared.

After the woman gave her the money, rejoicing at her unfair bargain, Martha purchased an ample, ugly green garment and awaited Jones' approval. Jones must buy himself a new coat, he would see that his mother had been both sensible and unselfish in disposing of the gift.

Jones let his temper go for the moment. It seemed to him that being a grind was a futile procedure. He told his mother if this was the way she was going to do, they had better come to the understanding that a gift was a gift, not a paying investment. He did not like the new coat which hinted of the days of wearing made-over things. He hated the very thought of those days. Reaction had set in. Now that he made money, he was contemptuous of petty economies. He wanted to be a sensible spender. He demanded the silk lined, solid silver things of life, a compromise for his lack of personal interests.

Of course Martha cried. She felt misunderstood, desperately sorry. She was not adjusted to this new way of living. Jones was kind enough never to tell her the real price of the fur garment, that would have been too cheap.

Instead, he was ashamed for having spoken as he did. Why flare out at his mother because of her thrifty, unselfish heart? So he bought her a charming mauve crepe trimmed with roses made from

silver beads and told her he had the opportunity to buy it wholesale, she need feel no compunctions.

When she wore it, he complimented her, insisting she grew younger every moment and he threatened to buy her another fur coat next year. She must understand the younger generation did not fear debt, a good thing, too. She need not hoard the butter and have two grades—cooking and table—or dole out the sugar as she used to do. He could not seem to get her out of these notions. Why not have a woman to clean—ladies in mauve crepe frocks certainly should not so demean themselves.

Martha was content once more, she forgot feeling that if Jones had goldplated the apartment he could not have paid more for it and her desire to slip into shapeless, comfortable clothes, re-read the sentimental novels she had enjoyed as a girl. Having started her children on the upward path, Martha longed to rest at the starting place instead of stumbling after them. Secretly, she preferred curtains looped back with satin bows and framed Bible mottoes, she thought green plush upholstery very satisfactory and considered it criminal to pay a man to clean windows. A million such differences from Jones' reformed viewpoint kept occurring. Yet she seldom voiced her opinions. First of all, Jones must be happy and last of all, she must be essential to Jones.

On the whole it was a happy winter these two experienced—with Marian spending the holidays and exclaiming over her brother's success. Marian was

closer to her mother than before. She was sincere in admiring her mother's clothes, her new leisure. She embroidered a collar for Martha's new dress and coaxed her to do her hair in a more becoming way. Together they sent Pat a Christmas box for which Pat effusively thanked them.

Pat was struggling to do her part. She wrote home faithfully. But she seldom mentioned Owen's business. They were living in a hotel, housekeeping seemed best not to attempt for the present. Pat admitted she was homesick. She wrote that Owen did not miss his mother as she did hers. Unbeknownst to Martha, she wrote her brother in care of the store to ask for the loan of twenty-five dollars. Owen gambled and drank, she still hoped things would right themselves, it was awfully hard to have to ask for help, she could not bear to have her mother know. Mother was so queer! She had always been against Owen. She would say hateful things. Jones was the best brother in the world—she could never thank him properly.

Jones sent the money and kept Pat's secret. He warned her not to stand too many irregularities, break away before it was too late or she would find herself unable to do so.

Pat replied that she needed even more money to pay actual expenses. Owen was ill tempered, unreliable. She was expecting a child in the spring and she was weak and wretched. Jones was her one source of strength. Would he tell her if she thought mother would be "nice" should she come home? She

must have someone love and take care of her for a while. She realized romantic love had vanished, what a mistake the marriage had been. Unless a miracle happened, they could not go on together. Perhaps if she could come home until after the child was born, that might prove the miracle.

On the same mail came a note from Marian confessing eye strain and the need for treatment. She had come out even with her money so far but this unexpected demand would put her in debt. Would Jones advance the needed amount until she was able to repay, she hated asking him, he had been such a prince of brothers. But eyes meant her very life. She did not want him to tell mother, it would worry her needlessly.

Jones had made several excellent sales. He had planned for a vacation in New York, he wanted the novelty of being away and not having to stint on expenses. But his sisters' claims were first. He was glad to be able to meet them.

He sent Marian a check and told her to have the best of treatment, she need not worry about the money, nothing must be spared if her eyesight was in any way jeopardized. And he wrote Pat telling her to come home. At this wonderful time, she must be with her own people unless Owen proved himself worthy. Indignation for Pat and sympathy for Marian veiled his sense of personal disappointment —but this would not always be.

CHAPTER XIV

MARTHA became dominant once more. With Pat chagrinned and bewildered, she could afford to be magnanimous. She set to work to re-order her daughter's life as she used to order her day's tasks. Pat must not return to her husband, he was a worthless boy incapable of assuming responsibility. If he failed to prove himself a good husband during the first months of marriage, what would he do when he was not only a husband but a father? It was not to be considered.

Martha secretly rejoiced that her judgment was correct, yet she grieved for Pat's disillusionment and was eager for her grandchild. It was providential Jones was as generous as he was successful, he seemed to have no other wish than to make his family happy.

He treated Pat as if she were a child, cautioning his mother not to hurt her by unkind remarks or gloomy prophecies as to Owen. Pat was changing. The fun loving girl who wilfully turned a deaf ear to advice was a somewhat cynical but still beautiful woman with a materialistic view of life. Pat realized she had "come a cropper" as she told Jones. Her first love, generously offered, had been unworthily received. But instead of being crushed, she re-

solved to learn a worldy lesson from the experience.

Life was before her, she argued, as much as it was before Marian or Jones. Her mother's attitude that this unfortunate marriage has "wrecked my little girl's life" was most annoying.

"It's an oldtime way you are looking at things," she complained one memorable day.

Martha was helping with the baby clothes, delighting in their gossamer whiteness. They recalled the precious time before Jones was born when dreams furnished the protecting armor against the sordidness of her daily life.

"Don't you realize what this means?" Martha demanded, taking off her sewing glasses, "suppose Jones had not welcomed you—many brothers would not—and you had had no one to come back to—where would you be? The world would neither pity nor pet you if it was asked to pay your board bill. The best thing you could have done, if you left Owen, would have been to go out to service—I don't see anything else."

Pat smiled. "You are behind times—there are other things."

Martha shook her head. "You have never seemed grateful, either."

"Bother gratitude, sentimental snivelling such as you delight in," her youngest child retorted, "I'm plenty grateful but I take a different way of showing it. Instead of collapsing, retiring from the world like a half nun, half martyr sort, I'm out to prove that an unfortunate marriage can be the stepping stone to

success. As soon as the baby is old enough, I'm going into business—someday own my own establishment."

"Leave your child with strangers?" Martha indignantly demanded.

"Better that for a few years while I earn enough to educate him and have him be proud of me than to be dependent on my brother's bounty only to handicap the child in later life."

Martha's dark eyes narrowed. "Being dependent and doing housework is nothing to be ashamed of," she insisted. She felt mentally stabbed. This beautiful, amazing creature who was serene even in the midst of a wrecked marriage, to calmly declare her intentions of becoming a business woman. Yet she was unable to answer Pat's arguments. She wished for Jones, he would have quieted Pat.

"What do you plan to learn?" she demanded coldly.

"I don't know—something rich people always want and are glad to pay for," was the reply. "I may start a smart baby clothes shop—after this experience—or be a specialist in knitting lap dog sweaters!"

Martha frowned. "You plan on my caring for the baby?"

"Not unless you wish—you always have to fuss over someone—it is Jones exclusively just now—he may be glad of an understudy." Pat was laughing mischievously.

"You consider that I 'fuss' over my son? Who else

would care for his needs? How else can I repay him?" Martha crimsoned with anger.

"I don't mean that at all—merely that your mind has been so occupied with getting your children ahead, out of the rut father got you into that you miss not having something to worry over—seeing that we are out of the rut. (I'm only temporarily side tracked, please remember.) You try to make every one of Jones' pennies do double service, really living his physical life for him as much as possible. By and by, Jones will be impatient, it wouldn't be a bad idea for you turn your interest to a grandchild. Not because it is mine," Pat's blue eyes were very clear and sincere, "only mine happens to be coming along a trifle forlornly. It will be much better for everyone. Think, mother, when Jones marries! Unless you've cut loose from him, you'll never be able to stand by. You and I will be closer in the future bcause I've been independent, grown away from you during the years when I should. Now I will start growing back —and stay."

"Of course you are not yourself—it makes you talk queerly," Martha protested, "I don't wonder—with Owen's neglect and your condition. You need not worry about me—as for your tirade about my being in a rut and so on, I'll keep on cooking the family liver and onions, it seemed my job from the first," Martha reached for more thread.

Pat caught her reddened hand. "Mother," she said almost breathlessly, "I don't mean to hurt. Here's the whole thing—I'm friends with you.

Marian is a polite acquaintance who would do anything necessary if you asked her to—only you never would ask. Jones has been both your slave and ideal and you his half-god. It is much wiser to be friends with your children. Oh, I'm not saying it cleverly ——"

"I shall not listen," Martha drew her hand away.

There were tears in her eyes. Pat regretted her frankness. She was thinking as she watched her mother how splendidly pitiful yet typical she was of countless mothers brave enough to educate their children. Pat hoped her child would never sit in judgment regarding minute yet momentous details causing Madame Grundy's approval or ostracism as the case warranted.

Those poorly shapen feet from wearing old shoes, stained hands which worked without ceasing, a stooped back, the queer way of "wuddling" into even new clothes, her broken hair, unlovely expressions of the commoner which came unknowingly from her lips—"Gosh darn" or "I'm hanged," endless phrases which grated. The limited knowledge of etiquette, amusing declarations such as "she had no time for psychology because it claimed dogs did not think," and a childish wondering why tenants of New York apartment houses did not call on newcomers, disputing the statement that fur coats are worn during San Francisco summers. There was no end to the picayune details which cruelly classified Marthas-in-the-middle, in no way concerned with their sterling virtues.

Pat, who knew less than either Jones or Marian, had a clever way of making the world think she knew even more. Her beauty, unmarred by physical hardships and enhanced by a taste in clothes, aided in the deceit. Her contact with hotel life, her marriage to a boy who was well bred if worthless all combined to bring this about. Despite her sorrow, Pat remained valiant and of good cheer. She meant to do what she threatened, start a business and become a successful modernist. She welcomed a child because there was in her nature a tender vein. But she did not propose to slave for her child as her mother had slaved. It never paid.

As she studied her mother's grieved face, a panorama of past events blurred her vision and changed harsh truths to pleasants fibs. She saw herself the spoiled child, taxing her mother's patience when she was worn from physical toil, she saw her mother washing at tubs late into the night in order that she and her sister wear crisp dresses at tomorrow's picnic. Or she saw Jones sweeping neighbors' rugs or carrying wood to earn pocket money with which to buy his mother's cough medicine. She visualized her idle father as he made life unendurable for his family —with her mother valiantly standing for justice and harmony and always—and no matter at what personal cost—for progress!

Those unfair punishments given Jones with Martha wringing hands in helpless protest and the girls crying softly. The first efforts to make beautiful the home according to her best lights, serving

strangers only that she could serve her own more completely. The tender pride at each report card from school, tears of joy at Jones' taking a prize, working at eighteen hours out of the twenty-four at everything from paper hanging to sewing on wedding finery, bargaining with second hand men, squabbling with her husband, listening to her children's prayers —always that interested, inspiring mother who made her children realize the dream must be ever upward!

How strange that she, worldly Pat, should so understand. She had to thank her mother for what she must *not* do.

"Mother, darling," she said softly, "I'm not myself —you are right."

Martha was mollified. She attributed everything to Pat's "condition." To her mind, women who left their husbands and were expectant mothers were persons to deal with tenderly, as if they were children. Besides, Pat's remarks developed a sudden fear, something suspiciously like the truth was in what she had said.

"That's my dear girl, now let's finish this slip before I lay the supper cloth. It is a veal loaf with mushroom sauce—Jones sure enjoys his vittles. To see him swing into the dining room the same as when he was a long legged boy just does my heart good. Whether it is off new china or my old broken set doesn't change the taste, I guess."

"Indeed, it doesn't," asserted Pat, bending her head over her work.

"There's a pie from preserved berries," Martha

added, "he always likes that kind of a desert. It doesn't take much to please Jones—he always was that way—I wonder if he will ever change?"

"Never," Pat declared, thankful the conversation had assumed old fashioned dimensions.

CHAPTER XV

BECAUSE Pat was doing what Jones unconsciously longed to do—living her own life—he understood his sister better than she surmised. She had made a glaring mistake, still she gloried in independence. He was determined she should continue to make glaring mistakes if necessary to achieve a proper goal.

When Marian came home for a few days, to give her eyes a rest, she could not comprehend Pat's development. The attitude of the sisters was best explained by chance remarks as to clothes, both perfectly good remarks as Jones told his mother.

"I'd like a gown investing me with romantic mystery," Pat said, "say coral velvet and a rope of black pearls."

"I'd rather have it said I looked as if I belonged in the frame of an old master," Marian informed her, "who cares for mystery or coral velvet sensationalism."

Martha thought this more of "the girls' nonsense," she did not realize how well it defined their differences.

Marian approved of Pat's being divorced but she ought never remarry. She ought to stay with her

mother and Jones and devote herself to her child. Marian declared she would never marry which Martha thought was "just as well." Marriage to Martha not only spelt separation from her children but having to vicariously share whatever sufferings might result from the union. A woman educated as well as Marian, able to earn her living and be her own mistress was wise to remain single. Martha tried to impress this on her older daughter. Pat's marriage "hardly seemed to matter" as she said. Pat was so young and it had been such a foregone conclusion that it would prove a failure.

But, as she warned Marian, when a woman of education starts in doing a man's housework, it killed something inside of her which she never liked to admit.

"No matter how you love him or your children, you're conscious of that dead thing in your heart. I've named it the might-have-been. You can't drudge and do headwork, too. Not for long, one of the other has to have it's innings. Look at me—I had what people in my time and home considered an education —and I worked to get it, too. The school teacher was always looked up to, you know. Then I married and your father brought me to your poor ignorant grandmother who wanted me to work, work, work. As soon as I began to work, your father loafed and she fell sick and died and the babies came. Someone had to keep things going—so the might-have-been died in me, too. I promised myself when Jones came that it should never die in my young ones. In this

country nobody ends as they start out and the way women have it, they slip back as soon as they undertake a house to keep and a family to raise with no other help than a washerwoman a day a week! By the time your children are grown—you're done out, you can only advise your daughter to be careful not to kill the might-have-been!"

Marian was politely interested. She had no intention of marrying. Even more than Jones, she was aloof from social life. She hoped to be appointed instructor at her own college. Then she would be permanently away from home and the disapproval of Pat's gowns and the way she wasted money, her flippant remarks. Pat had a number of equally gay friends who were rallying around her, Pat boasted.

The small apartment was often crowded with them. Also, Pat went forth to their parties and the theater. She never came into the house but what she had something funny to relate. She really enjoyed her position as a young, unhappy matron. Hers was a certain prestige. Besides, it proved to her haughty mother-in-law that she was happier than if she had remained with her husband.

Jones upheld her in doing as she wished. "You can't expect Pat to be sober and reliable," he pleaded, "who can reason sensibly when in the thick of a fire or advise the best insurance company for their neighbor? They wait until their own claim has been adjusted. So with Pat. Wait until her child is born and she accepts things as they really are."

Martha was submissive. She thought Pat should

do more of the work and be properly subdued. Take it all and all, there was considerable friction in the Bynight household and when Pat's robust son was three months old, Jones told the first deliberate lie to his mother.

He said he must take inventory at the store and would not be home until midnight. Therefore, he would stay at a hotel and sleep a trifle later in the morning. His young nephew was colicy and of a wakeful turn. Martha sympathized with him. The baby kept her awake, too—Pat slept more often than not.

There was no inventory to be taken but Jones wanted to go to a neutral hotel room, unmarred by family troubles. He wanted to think—what he wanted to think about he did not know. He did not realize that what he wanted was a chance to be himself.

The little apartment he so carefully furnished was now monopolized by his mother and sister. True, he had invited, even fostered the invasion—but the situation remained the same.

He went directly to the hotel. It was eight o'clock of a tender, summer night. Sitting at the window, he watched people streaming by. Cornwall was growing, important industries had settled there due to natural water power. Since his grandfather helped lay the floors of the Dunlevy mansion, the population had tripled and more.

Jones rested his arms on the window ledge. He was restless, guilty. He wondered if he better go to a

theater—but he dreaded meeting someone who might inadvertently tell of it later. He lit a cigarette and unpacked his bag, smiling at the articles Martha had seen fit to add. One might have fancied him embarking on an arctic expedition. There was also a copy of the new testament which she had given him years ago, she had made some unexpected money washing curtains for a friend. On the fly leaf was his name written in her slightly exaggerated hand:

"Jones Bynight—a good son.

"From his mother who appreciates him."

He laid the little book aside and went back to the window, resuming the rôle of spectator. He told himself he must move into larger quarters if Pat and the boy were to stay on. Certainly they would remain until Pat started into business.

Jones was proud of his nephew, he did not love him in the absorbing way Martha did nor share Pat's tenderness. But when young Owen had evolved from out the "slug stage" as he unfeelingly described it, Jones would prove an unfailing champion. Already he planned on sending him through college.

For now he must persuade his mother to let Pat have her way with the youngster. Endless differences of opinion marred each day. The baby was not warm enough, he was fed too often, he must not be allowed to cry or sleep in the dark—and when Pat, more in a spirit of mischief, actually rouged her son's cheeks because she wanted him to present a rosier appearance and sewed a fringe of false curls into his cap to conceal his baldheadedness, Martha told Jones

she did not consider Pat should be entrusted with a child.

Jones chuckled, recalling this. Yet only that day a similar clash helped drive him to the hotel.

"I know a wonderful chef d'oeuvre," Pat announced, "raw potatoes sliced and spread with honey. When Jones has another friend for dinner, he better try it."

"A wicked waste of food," Martha protested, "raw potatoes and honey! Whoever heard of such a scandalous combination."

"One of the girls told me—there goes my lamb, tuning up for the day—well, his lungs need development and I need my cup of coffee."

Martha rose from the table. "He's probably cold —you will not wrap him up enough—I've shown you enough times."

"Let him cry," Pat urged, "you are spoiling him."

"A crying baby has me ready to fly," her mother argued, "I will not listen another second," she marched in to her grandson.

Jones made his escape. He blamed neither. Only it was not his immediate concern. Had it been his own son, he might have acted differently.

He laughed at the memory of this incident, too. Then he began to consider his own interests. He wanted red blooded life, independent expression. That denied career clamored for an out in some form or other. He almost despised his commercial success, he resented being referred to as a "model young chap —worked his way through college—never wastes a

cent—devoted to his family." Even infrequent escorting of Martha to church proved a hardship. For Martha remained orthodox. Her children were amusing renegades. Pat played at being an Episcopalian, the drama of the creed attracting her. Marian was an intellectual agnostic and Jones a genial pagan. There were moments when he felt he could pray to Kawn-Yin, the heedful of prayers as well as bow his head in the bare church of his mother's choosing. And many more moments when prayer, *per se,* was a concentrated instant of silence during which a divine consciousness seemed within himself.

He should not sit here indulging in self pity, he who was financially independent and able to make the way easy for others. But it did not preclude a restless urge to seek recreations and friendships apart from his family. Whenever he brought friends to the apartment they were obliged to indulge in nothing but small talk as long as Martha was present. Now that Pat and the baby were there, company was impossible. When his mother's old friends came, Jones found it hard to be polite. Pat's giddy set was not his choice. When Marian was home she must have rest and quiet. Jones actually found himself deferring to a cleaning woman in the matter of entertaining a dinner guest. On Mrs. Siegfried's day no company was permissible because she mopped the kitchen the last thing and Martha could not set her mind on getting a company meal with a woman trying to wash floors and talk volubly.

Once started on this track of reasoning, Jones

found himself conjuring up endless complications and petty pricks. He wanted to live alone and as long as he could not, he demanded outside interests. Interests which must not interfere with his obligations.

As he sat here, a girl passed along the opposite side of the street. She wore an exclamatory red tulle gown. She swayed as she walked. Jones watched her. He wanted to walk with her, flirt with her, take her to some café and listen to her jovial chatter of anything she cared to fib concerning, anything proving a contrast to his problems.

A clock struck half after eight. A fine long evening to be gotten through—just to escape domestic details and a baby's wailing. He was puzzled and bitter! Perhaps he better go to the store—there were several things he could do. At least he would have kept his word to his mother. He put on his hat and left the hotel.

Turning the corner he found himself peering ahead to make sure the flutter of a red tulle skirt was not at hand.

He felt anything but inclined to pass the time of night with the watchman at the store, go softly up dark stairs to his department. What was the use in rearranging teak wood stands and carved ivories for some wrinkled dowager to lorgnette on the morrow?

Stumbling along, coming to no conclusion, Jones was confronted by the girl in the red tulle frock. To all intents she was waiting for a street car, a pretty, careless creature ready to accept a stranger's smile.

Jones hesitated. She turned her head away,

glancing back coquettishly. A car sped on without taking her as a passenger. Emboldened, he stepped up beside her. Lifting his hat he asked if she was a Miss Hansom—pardon the mistake—she resembled a Miss Hansom—had she ever been taken for her before—no—strange! Then she would be! He hoped she did not mind—yes, he was the one who had been looking out of the hotel window—had she seen him—had he looked like a Mr. Hansom, for instance? Oh, it had been his "ugly, nice head" she had remembered—well, that was flattering—another car sped by—he wondered if she cared to walk a few squares—such a glorious evening.

As they walked, the girl talking of many mad things, he forgot his perplexities. His partner suggested they drop in at a vaudeville. Jones said he would be delighted. He was admiring this bit of foolish girlhood. If she had troubles, she concealed them well. He listened to her fictitious history which she fancied he was fool enough to believe. He was, in reality, calling himself a fool for not having ventured forth long since. No wonder men called him a grind, laughed at him and let him alone. Then he became engrossed in watching the dimples in her cheeks.

After the vaudeville he took her to supper, the most elaborate hotel meal he had ever bought anyone. Wisely, he withheld his name; he marvelled that she did not resent this. But she had told many fictitious histories and lingered on many corners apparently waiting for street cars—which Jones did not take

into account. She considered him a "grand friend."

Leaving the café, she reached up in the dark entry and kissed him. Jones caught her to him with a reckless passion. There was no harm—save to himself. His family would never know of his philanderings. Outwardly, he would be twice as sedate, businesslike.

As he left the restaurant and went into the night with the girl, he recalled a young salesman in his department who had been married a few months previous. Jones had been invited to dinner at their modest flat. He had been a wistful onlooker. It had been such a happy, charming place radiant with wedding gifts and honest love. He had envied both the man and the girl and had gone home to where Martha was waiting to tell him the baby was malnourished—four ounces below par—and the janitor had refused to clean over the tops of the doors—could nothing be done about it?

But he no longer envied the salesman and his bride. Instinctively, he felt the change in emotion was unworthy.

The girl was hinting for the gift of a silver mesh bag, someone had offered a gold mesh bag but she had not allowed them to give it, she did not like them, so she refused to carry their presents.

"You like me, don't you?" Jones heard himself saying.

"Well—a little—you're a gentleman," was his answer.

Innocent of the grim injustice to everyone, mo-

mentarily flattered, Jones told himself he had "come on."

. . . . . .

In the fall the buyer for the oriental department met with an accident laying him up for some time to come. To Jones was given the opportunity of travelling through the Far East for his firm, as splendid and unexpected an opportunity as could be.

He accepted with alacrity. He had tired of tawdry flirtations, unworthy deceits. His mother and sister were even more at variance, with his nephew hinting of teething!

This trip would keep him away all winter with the recompense of new scenes and people, fresh efforts. When he returned the baby would have decided to keep fairly regular hours, Pat would know which business she wished to learn and he would help her. Marian would have started teaching, things would be more settled, less nagging detail with which to contend.

Not that he wished to shirk, but he felt useless in this daily friction. He must atone for what he considered his cheap flirtations by forging ahead in business. Jones was suffering from a poorly trained conscience.

Martha declared he was worried because of the baby's crying, yet she rejoiced at his opportunity. She mended and packed and advised until Jones found it an effort to be polite in his responses.

He had planned on moving into a larger apartment when the trip was concluded. Undoubtedly he

would have a more sufficient income. Buyers picked up special articles and retailed them with profit. Mr. Hamlin had given him several commissions and he had influential letters to Americans living in the east.

Perhaps only the girl in the red tulle dress grieved at his going. She knew she was removed forever from his horizon.

"God bless and keep you," said Martha at the momentous parting, so proud of his success that his absence was a pleasant cross to bear.

"God bless and keep you," answered her faithful son.

CHAPTER XVI

DURING the trip, Jones realized his own awkwardness as contrasted with the easy, pleasant manner of his fellow travellers. His somewhat monastic scheme of life made him "draw in his shell" as some of them commented. As buyer for the influential art establishment, he might have enjoyed an enviable position among the passengers—from those who thought he would "throw a good buy their way" to those believing him a personage of distinction. Jones' provincial self was in line for an ovation whether or not he deserved it.

It benefited him immensely. The process of mixing with a pleasure seeking crowd was something like developing an apparently uninteresting camera film. As the chemical soaked brush passes over it, strange objects are brought to light. So with Jones' personality.

He played shuffleboard rather deftly by the time they were six days out, was prominent in arranging the ship's concert, acted as gallant escort to the dowagers who called him that "amiable young man —also an esteemed art dealer" and was found drinking with the men in easy fashion.

There was a girl on board, Alice North, who did

more for Jones than all the others. She was going out to marry a missionary stationed in Japan as she told Jones. Jones resembled this fortunate person, she also confided and she decided she would "play with him" if he did not object.

Whether or not this rather frivolous girl would ever make a properly serious missionary's wife did not enter into her brief contact with Jones. It was the benefit she did in giving him her society, unhampered by conventional reserve. Young and in love, with Jones reminding her of her fiancé, she treated him as if he were an old friend. She, in turn, taught him "to play" nicely just as the girl in the red tulle frock taught him otherwise. His mother had inspired him to achieve material and intellectual success, his sisters had taught him unselfishness but this girl with her happy, well bred atmosphere made him long to love and marry just such a girl, become part of the social pattern as well as of the commercial.

She knew how to ridicule him for his gaucheries, gently yet with undeniable wisdom, she saw that he read the latest novels no matter how well he might know his classics. It had not taken her long to discover that Jones' background contained plenty of sterling virtues and hardships but no normal nonsense. "Life may be simple but it need never be sordid," she insisted, not a day after they had met.

Jones ambled after her obediently. The passengers called her a flirt—engaged to a missonary, too —it was not fair to monopolize the most interesting

bachelor aboard. But Miss North refused to share her find. She scolded him prettily for not helping her into her chair properly, made him rearrange her cushions and rug, gave him bridge lessons and actually had him strumming a ukelele while she sang. She refused to let him talk of his work. Jones refused to talk of his family. Therefore the time going across was put to a good purpose, Jones proving a most ambitious pupil.

When Alice North wore a startling blue crepe cross-stitched with brilliant butterflies and informed him this was the frock from which she expected to get little mileage, Jones recalled his mother's worries lest a gown was a poor bargain, it might not wash well. He contrasted the blue crepe with Pat's florid creations or the cheap finery of the girls he had known. Miss North laughed over the things his mother sighed about, she considered essential many things his mother regarded as nonsense. She knew how to play yet never sacrifice her dignity no matter how riotous grew the fun. She was always Alice North, another man's fiancée. She even shared her ideals and secret hopes with this lonely, interesting chap in order to make him realize that all work and no play make Jack not only a dull boy but very often a vicious one.

By the time she left the steamer, Jones to go on to China, she had him well in hand. He took her address that he might call on her on his way home.

"Goodbye, Mr. Bynight," she said as they parted, "I shall tell Frank everything we have done, how

you played understudy. He won't mind. He'll just laugh. You see, to be even a missionary, one must know how to laugh. So you learn to laugh, won't you? For you're on the road to becoming modestly great if only you discover a sense of values."

With the exception of this sudden friendship, Jones' winter was spent plying his trade in no uncertain fashion. He did well, both for the firm and himself. He found a rare treasure for Mr. Hamlin —a shrub of lapis lazuli, the branches bearing flowers of seed pearls and coral. Another precious purchase was a glorious cock carved from amethyst —a third was a Chinese gambling table and its chairs, hundreds of years old. Ancient jade buckles, paintings on silk, curious bracelets were stored in his trunks for special customers besides the merchandise he had shipped direct to the store. But the most marvellous of all was a priceless peachblow vase upon which he stumbled, paying only a song for the same, and which he guarded as if it were the crown jewels.

The charm of the orient did not grip him. He was not able to sufficiently relax. He became eager to be home, to see how the family progressed, his mother, Pat and her future, Marian, to have Mr. Hamlin's approval of his work. He wanted his bonus for these treasures.

He took the time to look up Alice North in Japan only to find she had gone into the hills with her husband for an indefinite period. He left her a wedding gift of Chinese splendor and went regret-

fully on his way. He had been curious to see this missionary who knew how to laugh and who resembled himself!

Coming home, heavy weather kept the passengers more or less below. Jones devoted himself to sketching out articles for various journals interested in similar art lines. He was conscious that he had begun to readjust his sense of values. He was convinced he must marry and settle into a home of his own.

He planned to have his mother and Pat stay in the apartment, they should have every comfort he could give. But he, too, had a right to his life, a life apart from theirs. He was more and more aloof from the atmosphere which was congenial to his mother. He wanted to express himself without the fear of hurting someone else.

True, there was only a dream girl in his plans—someone like Alice North, fun loving, gentle, kind of heart. Someone who would understand the history of the Bynights and be big enough not to harbor superior judgments.

To meet the original of this dream girl seemed the easiest part of the situation to Jones. It was asserting his independence which would prove the hardest task. As nearly as he could estimate, if all went as he expected, ten thousand wonderful dollars would be his share of profit from this trip—an unexpected fortune.

With his salary and ample commissions, he could afford to marry. His mother would appreciate his

position, as she appreciated his desire to take this trip. She had seldom discussed marriage with her son, never thinking he was of the "marrying kind" as she had stated. Besides, he did not have enough money to marry on, no woman would work for him as she had worked—that belonged to the dark ages. His sisters had heavy demands—this climbing process required continuous "boosts" on the part of some altruist. Martha's ability to boost was ended. She would do well if she realized she must not injure what she had already achieved.

The ordinary way of expressing it was: "Jones ought to be mighty good to his mother, but for her he'd be working in a butcher shop!"

The letters reaching him had told of but one change. Pat had left her son and gone to Chicago as apprentice in a beauty parlor. Martha expressed both satisfaction and concern over this event.

Certainly Pat would never be content to remain at home, it was only fair she become of value elsewhere. Martha loved her grandson, caring for him was a pleasure. Pat liked neither the drudgery of a house nor the detail of raising a child. Her care of Owen was anything but proper according to her mother. The Chicago beauty parlor was conducted by a woman Pat had met when she was first married and living in a hotel. The woman, who had always liked her, offered to have her live with her and pay her five dollars a week while she was learning. A fair offer, Martha thought. It would be six months before Pat was an efficient operator and

it might be a year before she could start into business for herself. Martha knew Jones would read between the lines, Jones must finance the new venture.

In later letters, Martha spoke well of Pat. The petty friction of every day living removed, the child completely in her care, she could take a broader view of Pat's actions. Instead of becoming flirtatious and accepting attentions with a view to remarriage, Pat seemed to develop along business lines. She had been disillusioned as to men and she now wanted to compete with them in commerce.

"She says she had her experience—with the neighbors watching, too," wrote Martha, "and is more level headed than I ever gave her credit for being. Only she never did know how to take care of her child! Also, she is more beautiful than ever. I think Owen would like a reconciliation but she will have nothing to do with him. In Illinois she can obtain her divorce on more liberal grounds than here. The woman who has the beauty shop says she is so wonderful to look at, with her pink and white skin, that she is an asset to the business. It seems like a fraud, doesn't it? But Pat swears that all their cosmetics are beneficial. I don't think Pat will want the boy with her until she is in her own business, He—" here followed a page of praise for her grandson.

"As for Marian, she prefers New England to home. She may be in love for she wears nose glasses and admits to owning French heels! You know how reserved she is—bless her heart. What wonderful

children God sent me, Jones, and you, my firstborn, how would I have endured it without you!

"Everyone knows of your trip and success, the papers have mentioned where you are from time to time—I guess Mr. Hamlin sees to that. He sent me some incense and a cashmere shawl, he said you meant me to have them on my birthday. The shawl is too fine to wear, I use it for a piano scarf. They're so dressy. I burn the incense every time I've cooked cabbage, seems funny to bother about that—I remember when the smell of cabbage was mighty pleasant. But Pat started me into doing it. She said I had to—in an apartment house. Well, I'll be a real lady yet, I certainly have to mind my p's and q's these days—but it is blessed sweet of you all to want me to! I hope my boy will be half as glad to see me as I will be to welcome him home.

"MOTHER."

This letter started a germ of melancholy as regarding his plans. To make one human being happy he had no right to disregard three others! How could things readjust themselves?

He left San Francisco as soon as possible, stopping over in Chicago to learn firsthand of Pat. He found all his mother had written was accurate but she had not given Pat full credit. Pat had turned her back on the past and its dangers of self pity. She was out to beat the world at its own game.

Martha had been right when she said Pat was lovelier than ever. In her green taffeta with a rakish pink hat, she resembled anything but an unhappy

woman facing the problems of support for herself and a child. She was radiantly glad to see Jones, she introduced him to Mrs. Bloomingdale with pride —Jones was an asset, too, no doubt as to that.

Mrs. Bloomingdale was one of those kittenish sub-dowagers who wear their own complexions at breakfast only; she realized that Pat was more valuable than ever, having met this devoted brother who had a comfortable income, considerable prestige and was in the heyday of a splendid career.

Jones goodnaturedly took them about, between times he interviewed other art dealers and exchanged the gossip of the day. He told Pat the beauty parlor business impressed him as humorous.

"Such frights going within your portals and such visions of loveliness coming out! A sell all around! Do you remodel noses and reduce sets of double-chins? I suppose you plan to preside over a white and gold salon of rejuvenation, change your name to Madame Patricia Vere de Vere and slink about in satin costumes with your yellow hair dressed like a bunch of chrysanthemums! I'm really not yet qualified to pass judgment—it strikes me as being as keen a trade as to gather up Chinese junk and unload it upon American millionaires."

"How you've improved," Pat disregarded her personal issue, "your clothes are so good looking and I adore the jade scarfpin. What did you bring me that is pretty?"

"A mandarin coat and a kimono—I got mother an embroidered dress."

"She will wear it while she makes bed quilts," Pat objected.

"Come, come, that's not nice—she will wear it while looking after your son."

"I didn't mean to be scratchy," Pat apologized, "only mother is so set and I'm so limber. That's one way to say it. We just could not get on. I admire her more than anyone I know—I never want to disappoint her in the big ways but I can never please her in the little ones. I'm growing up, too," she declared, tossing her pretty head, " studying nights —oh, not the way you did—but studying just the same. We are not the reckless parasites you fancy, even if we do make gray hair into flaming henna and parafin flabby cheeks. Trixie has had a mighty hard life—so has little Frizz, the girl you saw cleaning up. She just answers the phone and makes appointments. She had a bad stepfather, she ran off to be married at sixteen—her husband was a drug fiend and he put her on the drug. Later, she shot him in self defense and went through all kinds of publicity. She was acquitted but she had to break herself of the habit. She went into an institution at her own request—that took nerve. When she came out, she was adrift. Trixie saved her, she was game enough to give this kid a chance. That's only one of a hundred stories I could tell. I've seen life, not read theories. I could describe the intimate affairs of a pretty long line of silk hosiery if I wanted to. I could not help but think of myself when I heard about Fritz—I'd have been like her,

maybe, if you had not helped. Your help and mother's training make me grateful, ambitious," there were tears in her eyes.

Jones reached over and patted her hand. They were sitting in Mrs. Bloomingdale's apartment, Pat having the day off in view of Jones' departure the next day.

"You will always have my help," he promised.

"It will be my fault if I don't win," she declared. "it usually is. Oh, the silliness of these girls—do you know they are underfed, living off coffee and French pastry in order to buy clothes and get invitations to dinner. They'll do anything but settle down and work hard. I'm glad mother isn't here to protest. I don't want the boy with me until he is older and I'm in business for myself, I couldn't give him the right kind of a home. Besides, he takes mother's mind off you," Pat wondered if he would resent the remark.

"Do you think it does?" he asked doubtfully.

"Yes, she worships her grandson, his helplessness appeals to her. It gives you a chance to strike out. You are the sort that will fall terribly in love—no saving you, once started. I'm not that kind—thank heaven."

Instead of confiding his hopes, he asked, "How much would it take to start your pink-and-white business venture?"

"I'm afraid two thousand—to do it well, carry out my own ideas. But I'd be certain to succeed. I'd go to a North shore hotel and set up shop. Mrs. Bloomingdale says I'd be risking nothing."

"You are certain you never want to see your husband?"

"Positive. I'm to wear lavender as a proper divorcee's mourning, once I win my decree; the notion shocked mother! The only man I want to see or be grateful to is my brother. I don't say I'll never marry—but before I do, I want to know life at firsthand. I'm through with moonlight. I want a man of money and importance and in turn, I must have something to make him proud of me. That is why I like these rich corn lands, it is the great, stirring spot of the nation, where American drama is being played twenty-four hours out of the twenty-four. I like it, dirt, noise, confusion, vulgarity and all—it is up and coming, too; remember when I told you about that? Let Marian retire into decadent New England with it's repressed activities. I'll take the midlands. Besides, there's the boy. I don't adore him as mother fancies I ought—as her post-Victorian type adored their offspring. His cries do not rend my heart strings and I can spank him thoroughly if he betrays temper. But he is the big incentive in my life," a tender look crossed her face. "That is why I'm going to succeed—so he will not mourn over his father's indifference."

Jones nodded his approval. "You're headed straight," he said, "poor father, I remember his saying you'd come out all right—you stick on here, and I'll help start the business. I've had a pretty lucky trip and I don't know any better use for my money than to do this."

Jones felt Pat deserved his aid. With her brave resolves and dangerous spirits, Pat might yet veer towards unfortunate channels if no one stood by. His own dreams must wait. Fortunately he was not in love, save with a dream girl, a frail ideal he could easily destroy. He had no expensive personal tastes, his mother asked only for his love which was so easy to give. It would be selfish to think of doing otherwise than championing this younger sister.

To his amazement, he was buoyant of spirit at the turn in affairs. There was a relief at not making drastic readjustments in his personal life. He did not analyze the emotion—that Pat furnished an excellent excuse for not giving his mother a daughter-in-law.

He would join a prominent men's club, the headquarters being in the erstwhile Dunlevy mansion, buy a motor, have vacation jaunts, take part in social events which he had hitherto shunned. These would be sufficient antidote.

He hinted nothing of this to Pat. His visit had given her great pleasure. She had shown her associates how well protected she was by this handsome, generous brother. The world must treat her with respect. Because she rouged or drank a cocktail, enjoyed broad farces did not mean she was any less the disillusioned wife or tender mother. Her pleasent manner with men was that of a comrade. Her love for clothes and physical grooming was her way of "being on the climb" as she expressed it, just as Marian went in for translating Greek tragedies and

Jones would go for miles to see a new art treasure or discover some struggling artist and buy up his output.

Jones comprehended this, also the fact that his mother never would. The platform of the Polite Letter Writer was still Martha's to a surprising degree. She was somewhat ashamed this was so, since it was contrary to her children's wishes. She struggled to conceal sentimental beliefs, old style politeness. Jones knew, better than the girls, that his mother's mental life, *per se,* had been thwarted from the day she was married. Her spiritual and emotional lives were ever unfolding—but who of Madame Grundy's disciples takes count of these? And it was to win Madame Grundy's favor for her children that Martha had toiled.

CHAPTER XVII

To his surprise, Jones found Marian at the apartment. She had an opportunity to come before she began her summer school teaching. The moment they met, he knew the miracle of miracles had happened. Her eyes were tender, she flushed easily and on the third finger of her left hand was a man's shabby seal ring.

As soon as the first greetings were over, Jones demanded:

"Tell us all about him, Marian—is he good enough for you?"

"I knew Jones would guess," Martha clapped her hands delightedly, "sit here, children, while I see that Owen isn't into mischief. Tell him everything, dearie, he will understand. My, it does me a world of good to see you back, safe and sound, and successful, too, I'll wager. My boy home from the orient. My girl engaged to be married. Tell me how Pat is and I'll be so happy I can't stand it."

"Pat is coming on," Jones answered, nervously lighting a cigarette, "she is in her element making dowagers into subdebs and subdebs into vampires which seems to be the way they want things to

appear. I expect Pat will preside over Michigan Boulevard's most exclusive beauty shop, secretly amused all the while. I've promised to start her in business."

"You're the best ever," his mother glanced meaningly at Marian.

"I'm doing what makes me happy—I deserve no medals. Instead, where shall we begin to talk, letters never counting for much?"

"Let Marian be first to confess," she suggested, "we have all summer."

Meantime Jones was conscious of being disappointed in his apartment. Contrasted with what he had seen, it was garbled attempt at good taste. His mind was really not concerned with Marian's love affair or his mother's welcome or the baby's new teeth but to go to the store and talk with Mr. Hamlin, be hailed by clerks and patrons, receive his just reward. This stuffy place with his mouse-mother and a sister as sentimental as if she had never taken the Greek prize failed to intrigue him.

"Pardon me," he said to Marian, going over to the piano to remove the cashmere shawl covering and a vase of artificial flowers, "I wonder who put those there?"

"I did," Martha interrupted, poking her head in the doorway, "I know you dislike such things but the flowers seemed a good imitation. Mrs. Gleed brought them up—you remember her, don't you? She was James Slack's aunt that had the notion store down near the terrace? An awfully good friend to

me in days when friends were scarce . . . I didn't mean to stop your visit but I heard you ask about the things," she lingered at the door, a trifle hurt.

"Tell Mrs. Gleed we appreciate the friendship but won't she please keep the five-and-ten cent store at home," was Jones' reply. A faint odor of cooking annoyed him, also a sudsy smell suggesting wash day. The baby was screaming barbarically. He was becoming aware that Martha had changed almost everything in the room—to suit her taste or remove the articles from the baby's reach. His vases were huddled together, Mother Goose blocks were piled on his choicest prayer rug, his teakwood desk was locked and lonely of aspect and the books had been dusted but replaced in careless fashion. Martha had been a faithful custodian of his treasures but she was incapable of enjoying them.

Her workbasket piled with mending was on the carved table, there were framed lithographs in the hall, things she saved from Sunday supplements; The Storm at Sea, Too Late, Nelson at Tralfagar—huge things belonging to an institution reception room.

Yet he must not hurt her feelings, she was such a jewel to care for Pat's boy and keep his home awaiting him.

"Oh, it's all right," he said easily, "only the flowers don't go with my heathen litter—I suppose I've picked up even odder notions in the east."

"I wish you had kept a diary," she said enthusiastically, "I read your letters to everyone—the jani-

tor's wife had a son who shipped on an oil boat to India, she was always so interested in what you wrote. I took the best ones to the newspaper, they printed them—I've saved the copies."

"You printed the fool stuff," Jones began, "altogether too generous in your estimate of me, I'm afraid."

"Marian, what did people say to you—clear off in New England?"

"That the letters were deeply interesting," there was a preoccupied look in her eyes, "and it gave mother such pleasure to see them in print you ought not mind."

"Oh, I don't—where did you put my chess set?" he straightened a Japanese print, "and the nest of gods?" it was hard not to betray irritation.

"The baby cut his teeth on the chess set, those ivory figures seemed to be just what he wanted to chew away at," Martha confessed, "the nest of gods is in your room—in the chiffonier. I was afraid something might happen to them—ugly little imps that they are."

"Thanks," Jones walked up and down, puffing at his cigarette. "Does the infant howl like this without permission?"

"I'm afraid that is temper," Martha admitted, "because he is in his room and wants to be out where there is some excitement. He is his mother all over again—dear me, I remember how she pulled over a whole tub of clothes I had put to soak. I was worn out that night, it seemed as if I could not get a mop

and clean it all up. You and Marian were in bed. You know how your father used to keep Pat awake to play with and show off—I never had anything to say about it. And it always made me angry to remember the way he stood there and laughed at her —me with the mop and all the clothes to pick up and rinse and Pat drenched to the skin. 'She is as strong as you are,' he said, as if that was such a fine thing. I ought to have been glad she upset the tub and proved her muscle power."

Jones turned on his heel. "We must move into a larger place, when we came here we did not expect to add a talkative wonder to our midst. You must have help—but we can decide this later," he placed a chair beside his sister.

"I won't have any young girl to help me, they are more trouble than they are worth," his mother insisted, "we have enough room here—just enough to keep me busy. I like the exercise. Seems to me it is as good exercise as to play tennis or golf—did that ever occur to other folks?"

"We will see," Jones bantered, "when you wear your new gown and wave your new feather fan, you won't think of housework."

"Go 'long with your nonsense—talk to Marian and don't tease me. I advise you to start in talking if you still plan to go to the store—because my feet feel just like it's going to rain."

Jones soon learned Marian's secret. She was engaged to the most wonderful person in the world, also the most learned and in all ways remarkable.

His name was Robert Livingston Varley, he was assistant professor in ancient languages at Marian's alma mater. His family of old New England stock, were noted for their savants. Unfortunately, they were poor although their standing in cultural circles assured their welcome into any strata of society.

She had not realized she was in love with Robert Varley. He had realized he had been in love with her ever since she entered his class. From the first he preferred to admire her soft, brown hair and gentle features than to pay heed to her clever translations. He had felt, as he still felt, he had little right to speak of marriage. Lack of money, an ever-present ogre, prevented his doing so. That he would be other than a college professor was impossible. Teaching was his true vocation. The salary paid even the head of a department was nothing to exclaim over, the present head being a crusty bachelor. Undoubtedly, young Varley would be offered this post at some future date. Then he might marry—in a limited fashion, but for now, while this lovely young woman was most tempting, they must content themselves with a professor's courtship! Telling of their love instead of living it, visiting in boarding house parlors, exchanging favorite books would comprise this courtship. Marriage was at least five years in the distance—at least, so Marian repeated.

As she talked, Jones with an artist's imagination and sympathy realized the dilemna, a dilemna confronting too many others. Educated beyond drudg-

ery and impoverished in purse, these college men and maids were obliged to bide their time until the first flush of romance had died and with it a certain joy. Then they might solemnly unite pocketbooks as well as lives. It was not fair, Jones argued, there was something pathetic in his sister's unspoken appeal. She was no longer the clever bluestocking living for "culture's sake" as her mother said but a beautiful woman, in love with the right man, whose future was jeopardized by the lack of money.

He asked pertinent questions about Varley's people, were they cordial regarding the engagement —ah, that was nice. They did not know about Grandfather Bynight's being a cockney carpenter but she had been honest concerning her father and mother. They knew her sister had a divorce and was taking a course in beauty culture—this had mildly entertained them. And she had told a great deal about Jones, they were anxious to meet this successful, college bred man who had been sent to the orient. Marian betrayed the fact that Jones had impressed her New England family to-be. They were, besides, pleased with Marian's refinement and adoration of her fiancé, to say nothing of her reverence for his family and lack of frivolities. Only money was needed! The family were willing to give them some blue china and a spinning wheel when the happy day for housekeeping arrived but, alas, they had nothing more to offer.

"I never told them about mother's struggle," Marian added softly, "to bring us up."

"To bring us up to snuff, you should have said," Jones corrected, enjoying her confusion, "that is the way she said it—can't you remember the dining room on Elm street, say of a winter evening when father was out and we three sat about the red checked cloth covered table to study or play games? I can see mother now, wearing some outlandish thing someone gave her, sewing away at something which was to bring home more ducats and listening to our lessons or telling her the day's happenings. 'That's fine, honey,' she would say to you when you spelled Mississippi. 'Come, Pat, you've played solitaire long enough—try some arithmetic—there's my lassie—ho-hum, my back aches. Jones, how about some popcorn? A wee mite of butter in it, too—you'll find it in the glass jar on the third shelf—don't spill anything—' and how we greedy creatures would scamper off to pop corn and cheat on the 'wee mite' of butter and she would sit working, working until long after we said goodnight! Sometimes I'd steal back to see if she would never stop and there she would be, bending over her work, her eyes dim with weariness. 'I must have this ready by tomorrow, Jones, and it is easier to finish it now than to get up so early in the morning. I'm baking bread, too, it keeps the house warm for me—so I don't mind. Goodnight, lad.' "

He stopped suddenly, as if regretting the reverie. There were tears in Marian's eyes.

"How true," she said, "yes, that was mother! But the Varleys would not understand as we do. I

would never try to tell them. Besides, I must start in teaching and not thinking of marriage—mother has done enough. Why should I marry the first moment I'm able to be self-supporting and can pay back! I must help you both—you who have done so much and she who has sacrificed her all. When I do marry, I'll become a Varley, with his people's ideas and interests—that is what mother does not understand. I'll live in the world of faculty members," she tried to speak gaily, "be removed from you people to a degree. Yet it has made mother proud to have me be engaged to a professor. I must be content with knowing Robert loves me and will wait."

Jones went over to the window. Marian did not notice his silence, busied with her own thoughts. So was Jones. In that important moment, he was thinking of all his mother had done as compared with all Marian was renouncing and all Pat was going to need. He was the one to see that each received their due portion.

He craved love, realizing he was capable of intense, almost to be shunned passion. He was the sort of man who could be dissolute with numberless women if life forbade his loving the one woman! Already his cheap affairs were indicative of this drifting! He almost loathed himself because he was not an emotionless manikin, successful in business and the social worlds. Why was he so contemptible as to want to say to his sister:

"Very well, be engaged, grow withered of heart,

bitter of hope, become a grind, stoop shouldered, bereft of decent emotional impulses."

Or why did he not say to his mother: "I wish my own home, my wife—your place is not with me."

And inform Pat: "You made your mistakes—correct them as others are obliged to do."

Even as he wondered, he knew he would not desert them. His money would be spent in starting Pat's business and helping Marian's marriage, keeping his mother serene as the presiding spirit of his home! Perhaps this was weakness on his part but it was none the less inevitable. There was a strange flash of resentment towards all good, helpless women who had to be shielded and provided for, no matter what the cost. His problem was to become content, divert the strong current of normal longing into his work. The dream-wife, heaven be thanked she was but a dream, could remain a fragrant regret. He would never look twice at so-called eligibles, other women he would know when and how he chose. Jones realized, in sober fashion, that he was not unattractive to women, eligible and otherwise, they liked him; men admired him contrary to the usual rule.

With bitter humor he told himself he must confine his attentions in polite society to dowagers who wanted shawls or were nervous as to their lap dog's increasing avoirdupois. It was better he be the one to wait—with a man's elastic standards to alleviate the disappointment—than to let his sister become a victim of the "smell of the student lamp,"

have her beauty fade while her heart beat on in defiance. Jones had seen such women make tremendous fools of themselves after forty, attempting rejuvenation, playing with boys, sympathizing with criminals, telling of the men they might have married, stooping to unwise flirtations. This must not be! Any more than to marry and lavish his money on everyone save his wife!

He turned back to Marian. "My dear girl, plans are well enough. But when two persons love each other as you and your professor appear to be doing, there is usually an elopement whether the family bankroll is ample or no. You don't suppose I'll let you starve of heart while you overwork your brain for five long years! It is not necessary."

"But we've saved nothing," she confessed. "Oh, it will be hard—I care so hard and Robert longs so for a home! It is such a wonderful thing to have someone want you to be their home-maker."

"I have some money I never expected to have, don't really need," he explained about the trip and its benefits.

Marian's eyes opened in wonder and longing. "You mean you will have ten thousands of dollars," she said breathlessly, "why—it is a fortune—does mother know?"

"Not yet, I want her to be surprised," he felt wearied in explaining the thing—he wanted to have it done with—Marian married and away, that duty wiped off from his list of obligations.

"But you must not spend any on me—there is

Pat and her baby. You are not in love though, are you? No, I can see by your eyes. Then it is easy to think of someone else first. This selfishness of people who are in love is horrible—yet I'm glad I'm selfish, glad I'm in love!"

"Your happiness will be my reward," he said gravely, "someday I'll come visit you and give you Chinese things to counteract the effect of blue and white china and a spinning wheel. And when I do come walking in with a boo'ful lady all my own, you must get down on your knees and proclaim her as such! Now dry your eyes and write this learned man of love and letters that your brother insists he marry you by Christmas at the latest—how do you think he'll take such a command?"

Marian was kissing him, soft, careless embraces. "You darling," forgetting her usual reserve, "I'm dizzy—pinch me to make me sure it is not a dream —that you are actually giving me your bonus——"

"Don't waste kisses," he advised a trifle ironically, "name the first boy after me instead! Really, it is interesting to note you ladies of education are as effusive as ladies of leisure when it comes down to cases. Let us be practical and plan—I will start you off with four thousand—can you manage to win Dan Cupid with that amount?"

"Why—the brown bungalow of the retiring biology professor will be ours," she cried, clapping her hands, "we can get it for a first payment of two thousand dollars——"

"The other two thousand must create a scholarly

atmosphere within," his tone still ironical. "I'll be responsible for your wedding finery."

"You are sure you want to do this unselfish thing?" she said slowly.

If only they would stop thanking him, calling him unselfish, heroic!

"I think grave injuries result from a woman's being denied her love rights," was his answer, "so will you kindly marry this ardent savant and stop making such an ado over it? You'd be impossible if you didn't follow my wishes."

They both started, a slight noise coming from behind a screen. It proved to be their mother, delighted eavesdropper.

"I couldn't help slipping in, dears," she apologized, "the baby dropped to sleep like a lamb and curiosity got the better of me. Jones, you saint on earth, and Marian, you lucky girl, come here this minute," holding out her arms to them.

They came into them, colliding in delightful confussion. "Now, mother, you are going to be moved into the Colonial Apartments," Jones added, "we can't let the Varleys buy a bungalow and we stay put. We've got to have space for my new junk, in the bargain."

He took advantage of the excitement to leave Marian to talk "women's notions" with her while he went to the store. It was a relief to be out of their sight, away from the plans and happiness. For he was an envious spectator as well as the miracle worker.

CHAPTER XVIII

HAMLIN was enthusiastic over Jones' success but even more enthusiastic over his return. He had come to rely on this young man's companionship as well as his business judgment. They sat chatting over the east and mutual friends, buying and selling conditions until it was dinner time.

"Mrs. Hamlin is away and cook uncertain—come eat with me at the club," he proposed, "a tame celebration for your return, at that."

So Jones took his first dinner at the club, exhilarated and not a little flattered when Hamlin introduced him generally and had his name put up for membership.

During the evening, spent in the club parlors, Jones confessed his family's plans and his intentions as to helping them. The art dealer's blind eyes kept staring over his head as if he were studying some panorama.

"And what of yourself?" he asked.

Jones resented Hamlin's "seeing" his thoughts. "I'm going to turn blasê clubman, sir," he announced, "and make you start the art journal I talked of last fall. I can see its possibilities."

"Didn't decide you wanted to head your own

family while you were travelling about?" Hamlin's fingers tapping loudly on the chair arm.

"Not at all," Jones betrayed his irritation.

"Ah," murmured Hamlin, "I dare say you will find out like we all do that Epictetus was right when he said there were some things which *do* matter . . . as to the art journal. My young friend, the advertising campaign is what worries me—you are not the practical man to swing it successfully and we must——"

Jones was wondering just what Hamlin had "seen."

. . . . . .

Flushed with rosy dreams and impatient for their fruition, Marian returned to the university town. She would teach the entire year in addition to housekeeping for two for she did not want to lose the money or disappoint the faculty. The marriage would take place during the holiday recess, Jones and Martha to be present.

As soon as she left, Jones affected the move into the Colonial Apartments. It was a well bred place in the park section of the city. Martha could not adjust herself to the change. She considered it a wicked use of money to make this apartment into a "color debauch" as Jones dubbed it. The pale blue woodwork, dull yellow hangings and furniture done in ashes of violet brocades were not to her liking. As she told an awed friend of other days: "Seems as if I had wandered into a society play and couldn't find my way out. It is elegant enough, goodness

knows, and I'm proud of my son but sometimes I wish I was back on Elm street where I could slick up the front room the way I liked and live in the dining room for solid comfort."

Further tenseness in daily living was the outcome of the new apartment. It seemed as if a game were being played by Martha and her son in which she was losing, point by point and Jones gaining in power.

Having resolved to see his sisters "through to the finish" as well as provide handsomely for his mother, Jones could not help being overbearing. Redoubled interest in business, membership in the club and his new apartment became his paramount interests. He forgot to use the pronoun "our"—it was "mine" which was in constant circulation. He no longer brooked his mother's suggestions as to taste. He banished her dêbris of "uncomfortable mementoes," not a stick of black walnut or plush, no lithographs or hideous open stock dishes, rugs with the pattern of riotous geraniums. The fact that Martha, by force of habit and sense of insecurity, still insisted on petty economies was another source of variance.

"I don't want you to single out the poorest chop for yourself or eat leftovers, turn the heat off in your room so the rest of the house will be a degree warmer—which it will not, incidentally. Why do you do such things now that we have plenty? I'm not hoarding money, I want to spend it making you comfortable, won't you please understand this and act accordingly? If you want strawberries in Janu-

ary and they are a dollar a quart, buy them—don't look at me with horror because I am gulping them down without due reverence for their price. If you want a new dress, get one—don't have some provincial working here for a week and cluttering up the place with threads only to have you emerge in a madeover thing you have hoarded for years. And don't cry," he concluded, "I'm not scolding, just trying to suggest. I want life to be so pleasant you will forget it was ever otherwise. Banish self imposed privations, retrospection."

"I feel useless," Martha defended. "In those old days when a strawberry shortcake even in season was a treat and you wore trousers cut over from your father's, I was necessary to everyone. It is hard to sit by. Have you never thought of it? Well, I suppose everyone has their day and we must have a night as well. Mother is an old-fashioned fuss. But I wish we could end with a glowing sunset."

Jones took her worn hand, the blue veins prominent and threatening, in his. "You are necessary to me," he lied, hating himself, "you are the homemaker. I'd put up at a club if it wasn't for you—think of that." He felt light hearted having told the lie and when he saw his mother's face brighten, he proceeded to tell several others. He had no wish not to have her preside over his house, most certainly he would never want any other woman to do so. He begged pardon if he had been rude, only he did not want a "boiled mother" as the first course at dinner. Didn't she enjoy the slightly formal way they lived?

Surely, she remembered the winter evenings when they had planned to do so—just the two of them. Why was she so shy of his friends, silent as if afraid to be her natural self. As for the old friends who had not changed a molecule since the days of worshipping cut glass and thinking motto calendars regulated universal morals, perhaps he had been intolerant of them. He did not wish to curtail her entertaining them—only couldn't she do so when he was not about?

Martha kissed him, happy once more. She was still head of the family since her displeasure brought Jones at her feet. She must try to live up to all he expected, seeing she had brought it to pass. So she kept her own counsel about the apartment furnishings and the lavish dinners Jones ordered for his "queer friends" who came not only to eat but also to drink and be merry, to Martha's stiff horror, talk wildly of solemn things and treat vital issues with unheardof flippancy. They seemed to admire Jones—to his mother's mind, he led in conversation and ideas. She was proud of his belonging to the men's club but she told him never to ask her to any affairs including women guests. Jones did not press the question. He knew too well what unfair advantage his mother would be at. To make amends he bought her a handsome diamond brooch.

Marian was writing how happy she was, the brown bungalow already in her name and plans for the wedding under way.

After Thanksgiving, during which Pat came home

to see her son and admire the new apartment, Jones became conscious of nerves to the extent of being morose and inclined to turn combative if one took issue with him.

Hamlin had set off for Florida leaving Jones as assistant manager of the establishment, which demanded close attention to detail. Jones was becoming short of manner with humble artists uncertain as to their success and haughty when dealing with the nouveau riche. He was amused at this change in manner whenever he took time to realize that it had come about. At the club he was rated a "quiet spender, never overdoes" and the town's substantial business men counted themselves his friends.

The day after Pat left, Martha fell prey to neuralgia. She went to bed swathed unbecomingly in flannel bandages, odors of medicine prevading her room. Jones was ashamed of his lack of sympathy, he was too delighted that his nephew now passed into the firm hands of a nurse.

"If you hadn't cleaned those damned chandeliers," he told her, sitting beside her bed, "you never would have had this trouble."

"They were so dirty—I was ashamed to have anyone see them."

"They looked well enough to me—people don't go about gazing at the ceiling. Why didn't Jane do it?"

"She can't do everything," was the fretful answer, "you seem to think she has four pairs of hands—you want so many extra things, the vegetables for salad cut like flowers, for instance, stuffed celery,

rose leaves in the finger bowls—oh, only a housekeeper can understand. It would take two maids working very steadily to keep things the way you like unless I worked most of the time. And since you want the boy kept in the nursery, it means another effort. He's so strong willed. Besides, cleaning a few chandeliers didn't give me neuralgia—it was years of overworking when the house was cold and I didn't fire up just because of expense."

"But why do the one extra thing that brings neuralgia on? Go south if winters bother you—Florida—Cuba—New Orleans—anywhere——"

"Me go away all alone and miss the good old winter? Never," she said crossly, pulling the hot water bottle under her neck. "Um, that feels so good—hand me the salve—will you?"

"Beastly smelling," as he obeyed, "heavens, are you using a piece of common cloth for a handkerchief! And an alarm clock for a timepiece? Why, mother!" He looked at her stand in dismay.

Martha half moaned, half laughed. "That's part of a sheet that was too torn to mend—it makes good enough handkerchiefs for common use—the face of the alarm clock is large enough for me to read the time without getting my glasses—that gilt clock you gave me is only for show——"

Jones rose and put his chair back into place. "Think I'll stroll over to the club unless you want me to stay," he said sharply.

"No, sleep will put me right better than anything else."

"Want me to bring or send you up anything?" he was formally polite.

"No, I don't know what to do with half the things I have now. Oh, I wish you'd look in at Owen and see if he's asleep—she may forget to pull the shades and light makes him wakeful. Goodnight—don't worry about mother."

Jones glanced at his slumbering nephew and then left the house. He owned no motor as yet, so he walked briskly towards the club. It was a November night, the wind swirling around every corner, brushing up heaps of leaves and street débris, capturing hats and making skirts fly balletwise. Jones would have preferred staying home, could he have been alone. He had refused a dinner invitation and the prospect of the club with it's sedate members discussing politics punctuated by drinks was not pleasing.

He slowed up in his walk. He was passing a public dance hall, a respectable place where dances open to the public were held twice a week. The crowd buying tickets and going in attracted his attention, they seemed jolly and well intentioned as they pushed and joked with each other. Something about them suggested youth, whether it was their gay dresses or their hilarious spirits he could not tell—but it proved contagious. The orchestra was tuning up, a strum of fiddles and squeak of cornets being audible.

This sound sent the crowd flying within. Jones found himself following. He glanced about to see if anyone was watching. He was next standing in

line before the ticket window, ahead of two girls who regarded him with polite interest.

The older was a thin blonde, at least thirty, with sharply chiselled features, overdressed in red, her hat a never ending feather plume. The other was a stolid sort with coarse black hair, rosy cheeks and curiously black flecked hazel eyes, the type that would look well in spangles. Her loosely fastened coat showed that she wore a frock of salmon colored satin with bands of black lace while strings of jet called attention to her full, white throat. She suggested physical strength and little brain, likewise a bad temper.

Jones stepped aside to let them buy their tickets, noting that neither had escorts. They did not flirt with him as a result of the courtesy but bowing rather grimly passed into the hall, Jones following.

During the opening dance, Jones occupying a seat on the side, he noticed these girls danced together—and danced well. They walked to a bench as soon as the encore was concluded and talked together during the intermission. Numberless girls passed slowly before him but to these he paid no attention. Men of common bearing soon enough dated with them for dances, some disappearing into an adjoining beer hall. But these girls, interesting because of their aloofness, danced the second and third numbers together returning each time to the same bench to wait for the next.

He speculated concerning them. Did they room together, where did they work, were they strangers

in the city, what were their names and would they dance together throughout the evening as properly as pupils in a finishing school? He was not drawn towards the blonde but the brunette wearer of salmon satin. She had removed her hat and her heavy black hair showed a glitter of jet combs. As she moved she betrayed a verve and dash, like a peasant doing a native dance, unconscious of charm. Her partner was more sophisticated, restrained.

Jones forgot the irritation over his mother's neuralgia and the way she insisted on re-arranging his carved ivories. He enjoyed the cheery atmosphere where everyone was out to have a good time and took no heed for the morrow. He bought himself a stray beer, abhorring the stuff but doing so for the lack of something better.

He was shy of approaching a partner, he did not want to impress these people as being different and he knew he had not the bearing of an ordinary man. His clothes were distinctive and betrayed excellent taste, to say nothing of manicured nails and polished boots. They might think he was there to ridicule.

Returning from the bar, he found a man had added himself to the girls' company, evidently a long accepted cavalier of the blonde. They left the other girl to her own company as they glided away when the music started. Jones walked along the side of the hall, determined yet shy. He found the girl easy to approach.

"I beg pardon," he began sitting down, "but I don't know anyone here and I've been watching you

dance. Wouldn't you try this number with me? Although I'm not counted an expert."

She twisted an embroidered handkerchief in her strong fingers, smiling up pleasantly. "I'd rather talk until the next one," she said, "I like to know who I'm dancing with. Poppy never dances with strangers either—that is her regular fellow, Fred Flynn, a street car conductor. His hours weren't so he could come with us, so we stayed together until he got here. They're going to be married soon. She met him here through another girl—nearly two years ago. He's particular about who she dances with."

"Perfectly correct on Mr. Flynn's part," agreed Jones, enjoying the situation, "but why need we stay strangers?"

As she laughed her strong white teeth flashed. "My name is Bertha Mullen—I work at Briggs' the wholesale millinery store on the square. I guess you know where it is. Poppy Templeton is in the remodelling department of the Fashion Store. She lives with an aunt but I stay at the Working Girls' Home—sounds like an orphan asylum, don't it? It's the best place for girls with little wages, you get your room and breakfast real cheap and they let you do your laundry work nights. Of course there's some things I don't like but others that makes up for it—you gotta be in early or explain why and you get awful sick of goody-goodies that are on the board but there's a nice parlor to entertain your friends and steam heat in the rooms and plenty of

hot water and it's respectable and that's a lot. If Poppy hadn't an aunt, she'd live there, too, but she's going to be married anyhow, like I said. He has bought her a house way out on the east side—nice, too, I guess. You see, Poppy wants to get away from her aunt," she broke off, blushing, "I been telling you everything—you haven't said a word."

"I've been too interested," insisted Jones, "but my name is—er—Clarence Montmorency," pausing to see if she would allow the joke to stand. But she frowned quickly.

"Cut that out," was her frank order, "I've told you fair and square and you've got to do the same or we don't dance—" but she was smiling.

"I beg pardon," he handed her his business card.

She gasped as she read the name. "That's the swellest store in the town—well, Mr. Bynight, I guess I won't mind waltzing with you. Here come Poppy and Fred, I'll introduce you," beckoning enthusiastically.

Having exchanged remarks, Jones managed to spirit Bertha into the beer hall where they sat at a side table, shielded with artificial palms. Here, oblivious to the dance, they ordered a sufficient number of beers to satisfy the proprietor, the strains of the orchestra flavoring their conversation with dangerous romance.

He learned the intimate details of Bertha's commonplace background, tossing his beer away from time to time that he might be ready to re-order when Bertha had consumed her glass with a gusto.

"Buy ice cream," she suggested after an hour's tête à tête. "They have iced cakes, too—lots of the girls coming here don't drink, so they make a feature of the other stuff."

"Iced cakes and vanilla cream for two," he ordered promptly, wondering if she would be able to consume the latter with relish.

He added a bunch of paper roses to his offerings at which she was delighted, pinning the crimson tissue affairs at her waist.

"I love red roses best," she confided, "I don't know but what the artificial ones are the nicest in the end. They last until you are ready they shouldn't. That is so with lots of things when you stop to think—real things have to have their own way but artificial things do as you want them to," she dipped into her ice cream with enthusiasm.

"You're not eating any dessert," she objected presently, "aren't you hungry or are you a whiskey drinker?" there was nothing coquettish or impertinent about the question, it was asked in the matter-of-fact way one says, "French dressing or mayonnaise?"

"I'm not hungry—I'm having too good a time to eat. You might give a fellow a rosebud for his buttonhole," he suggested.

She broke one off and jumped up to fasten it herself. "There you are," returning to the ice cream, "I suppose Poppy and Fred thinks we are lost. Still, I've come here lots of times and sat here like a bump on a log while they danced. Folks in love are selfish.

I've learned a lot watching them. If I'm ever in love," such sparkling blackish eyes that studied his meaningly. "I'm not going to be commonplace like they are, talking about affording a washing machine and laying a cement driveway. I'd enjoy being in love instead of enduring it, wouldn't you?" she leaned her plump arms with their suggestion of brunette down on the table, waiting his reply.

Jones begrudged answering, he wanted Bertha to talk for as she did so his irritability vanished. It was like happening in at a good vaudeville.

"Quite true," he approved, "what else would you do—if in love?"

"I'd care as fiercely as I'd be able to hate," she threatened, "I'd be different from Poppy—but then Poppy had two affairs go wrong. It kind of soured her, the girls say. Her aunt—oh, I forgot to explain, her aunt, Mrs. Templeton, is a spiritualistic medium. I've never been sure if she kids herself she is on the square or not. She certainly plays the finished part whichever way it is. Her husband was a paper hanger. After he died, she nearly lost her mind—she claimed to hear voices and all that. Seeing as he left her without a cent, being a medium came in handy. She's heavy on her feet and it would have been hard to go out to work. So she worked up quite a trade. Once a week they have séances at her house, the rest of the time she gives private readings. She's had a little trouble with the police but it is blown over and lots swear by her. She says her guides are an East Indian and a Mohawk

chieftain. Well, what I was getting at is this—this aunt never liked Poppy's other fellows. She said the first was married and sure enough he proved to be. The other she said would die—but he went away instead and was never heard of. That made Poppy awful sore because Poppy was dead soft on the first fellow and crazy about the second and both times got her clothes ready to be married, besides lending them a little money. She worked hard for her money, too." Bertha's black head shook in disapproval. "Her aunt said it served her right and that started a quarrel. For a while Poppy didn't live at home. Then her aunt broke her wrist, so she came back to do the work. She's kind hearted. It was then she met Fred Flynn and he's proved right up. But the bloom was off the peach as far as being romantic went. Poppy was pretty canny and Fred had to produce references. Her aunt liked Fred from the start and Poppy hates having her aunt remind her that she had the right dope on the others, due to her guides. Poppy don't believe in spirits, my, but I'm talking a lot," she paused, conscious of her raised voice and that a waiter hovered nearby.

"Bring the lady a raspberry ice," said Jones, "and I'll have some mineral water—any kind. Please go on, Miss Mullen."

"That explains Poppy being practical and I don't wonder. Only I'd rather be different. I had a disappointment, too, but it didn't make me bitter. Maybe I didn't care much," she laughed mechanically.

"What was it?" he was not conscious of his rudeness.

"A fellow that travelled for millinery supplies paid me attention for nearly two years," she answered quickly, the affair having been of vital importance. "He wrote me some of the greatest letters, everyone who read them said they sounded as if they came out of a book. Everytime he was here or could run up for a day he showed me a grand time but he never told me he was engaged to another girl. He always talked about our getting married some day and how splendid it would be—I planned on it and sort of told it around and even had Poppy's aunt go into a trance and she said she saw me as happy as a queen—that encouraged me. One day, I was a little impatient about his never coming to time about the date and all, I got a letter from him which said something like this: 'Dear Bertha—I was married yesterday to a girl from my home town. I'm sorry I can't explain but I want you to know I will always think the same of you—Jo Willard.' That was the last word I ever had from him. The letter was mailed from Chicago so I didn't know where his home town was or anything more'n a rabbit. It keeled me over for a week or two but I told myself I wasn't going to waste time moping after Jo Willard because I never was dead gone on him. I forgot it, soon enough . . . that's my story—my stars," before Jones could comment, "they are playing Home, Sweet Home—and we've been sitting here all this time——"

She darted from the table, Jones following to

waltz the number with her, her firm, fine body close in his arms.

"Going to take you home?" he whispered.

"No, Fred has his ancient boat outside, he wheezes it about for us every place we go. I couldn't let you take me home unless you called first," the music had stopped despite the clamor for encores.

"I'd call if you'd say when."

"You're kidding me—you, Mr. Bynight of Hamlin's calling at a Working Girls' Home—I'd be ashamed to have you see the place."

"Make it at Poppy's house," he insisted, "or wherever you like."

"There's a dance on Friday," she suggested quickly, "you might call and bring me. Poppy's aunt is at 489 Michigan street—do you know where that is? Swell neighborhood, isn't it? Between Copelli the cobbler and Fitzsimmons the fireman! But it's respectable," with emphasis.

Jones wrote the address down, Poppy and her fiancée acting as curious spectators.

"About eight?" he asked.

"Fine," Bertha was nervously fingering the paper roses. "I wonder if you'll really come? So many fellows just string a girl these days."

Jones laughed. "Try me and see. You'll not forget to be there?"

Unable to restrain curiosity, Poppy swept down upon them. After a little bantering, Jones said goodnight. He felt it had been a great lark. He tried to picture Bertha if she were educated, in a

different environment but at best, he told himself, she would be the stupid sort who enjoyed a play better if it had a prologue and would want to eat ice cream with a fork. He preferred her as she was.

CHAPTER XIX

He kept remembering her naïve remarks all the next day, visualizing her carefree, somewhat attractive self as she sat drinking beer and eating innumerable iced cakes. Once, glancing out the store windows, he fancied she passed, wearing a gaudy black costume cross stitched with white. Which was true.

Bertha, too, was "set up" concerning the event. Poppy's somewhat shrewish warning about Jones being a trifler fell on deaf ears.

"Because you picked lemons before your present peanut is no indication for me," she boasted.

"I'm a friend, so I warn you," defended Poppy, "watch your step—this man is making fun of you—I've a good notion not to let him call."

But Jones, immaculate as if for the club, appeared promptly on Friday evening. Poppy declined to accompany them and play the gooseberry at the affair.

Bertha sallied into the night with a heart as light as Jones would have wished his own. She was dimly aware things were not as she would wish them to be, that this brilliant yet kindly man was amusing himself, concealing his real personality and that he would continue to do so. Yet she was content. His

evidences of wealth won her. One of the first things she asked as they left the house was:

"Is your scarf pin real? Poppy and Fred say it ain't."

"For once they are wrong—it is real and extremely ugly," he answered, "let us talk of something beautiful—your eyes, for example."

Bertha giggled. She wished the shop girls were witnesses to her triumph. "You're different from Fred—last night he said he had a compliment for me, that I was pretty in two ways—pretty ugly and pretty apt to stay so."

Jones was humorously indignant. He was wondering if she was appreciative of the night sky, since silence fell between them, only to have the idea harshly exploded.

"I been eating onions," said the practical beauty, "I shouldn't wear such things out to a party, should I?"

Jones assured her she had a perfect right to do so, he told of the garlic scented passengers he had encountered on his trips.

This was Bertha's opportunity. She had promised herself to learn more of Jones' background—and future. But she tried without success. He was capable of impenetrable reserve. He made her feel that asking questions was anything but the correct line of action and those he answered were in the form of paradoxes. He made an engagement to take her to a vaudeville the first of the week. She promised to knit him a tie as a reward.

"Thanks," he said, "but it would put you to a lot of bother."

"Some kinds of bother are pleasures," smiling her broadest, "or wouldn't you want to wear a tie I'd knit? Wouldn't it be good enough?"

"You want me to give battle to that don't you?" Jones retorted. He did want to have her knit the tie—but not be obliged to wear it!

"If you are going to do all that for me," he added, "I must do something for you—come, what shall it be?"

They were at the door of the working girls' home into which Jones could not go, it being past the approved hour.

Bertha glanced at the dim light burning for late comers. Then up at Jones. "There're a lot of things to tell you," she began abruptly, "and after I've told them, maybe you won't want me to knit you a tie——"

She waited for him to name a time and place where these confidences might be exchanged. He did so.

"Won't you take dinner with me tomorrow—a real Italian table d'hote—bread sticks, red ink and all. We can talk all we like and not feel hurried. Shall I call for you?" remembering he had a tentative engagement elsewhere but resolving to cancel it.

"I guess you mean Gonfroni's, don't you—I'll meet you right there," she answered to his surprise, "Poppy and me eat there often. At half after six—so we can get a corner table."

"Gonfroni's—half past six," he repeated, tipping his hat.

As he walked home, he wondered how interested he would be in her remarks. Jones had yet to learn that negation was never as productive of great things as affirmation. His interest in Bertha was entirely one of negation, he did not like her for many reasons, he did not want her to become overly fond of himself—here, he called himself a prig—because he did not intend to become overly fond of her. She amused him, served as a contrast to his environment. She seemed to Jones to be a kind, common sort of young woman without any background, her chum's marriage inciting her to quite natural envy.

Between the time he was to see Bertha and his midnight walk home, Jones wrote Marian and Pat letters of sympathetic understanding.—Marian about her approaching wedding and Pat for the new business undertaking. He did not share his mother's prejudice about Pat's not attending the wedding. He upheld her decision, chuckling at her statement that instead of having "Jones waste good money for railroad fares, only to be regarded as the bad fairy —a divorcee, please let me have one half the amount towards an electric hair dryer and give the other half to Marian to help her in becoming an intellectual snob."

Martha considered this lacking in sisterly love; she was going to write Pat how she felt and how Marian would grieve!

"Nonsense," Jones interposed. "Pat's right—

what would she do in the savant territory, her spun gold hair alone would be cause for suspicion. We are sufficient to represent the family. Because the girls are sisters is no reason they are en rapport otherwise. I don't think Pat missed Marian when she eloped nor will Marian feel a lonely throb because Pat's svelte self is not hovering at the altar—if there is an altar."

"That sounds as if you belittled family ties," his mother murmured, "marriages are solemn events even in this day and age."

"I value family ties," Jones persisted, "but Pat's experiences in the world have developed her sense of humor past the point of being a neutral presence at a college wedding. If she doesn't want to come, why insist?"

Martha did not argue. She held resentment against this opinion and blamed Pat and not Jones. To her mind the beauty parlor business was something deserving of scant success. It hinted of the parasitical side of life and that her child was engrossed in it was not to her liking. However, Jones wrote the checks as Pat requested and the electric hair dryer and a set of glass baking dishes were forthcoming!

Besides these letters, he experienced his first actual argument with Hannibal Hamlin. It resulted in temporary defeat for Jones. The matter had arisen concerning artists exhibiting at the store gallery who suddenly withdrew their canvases and re-sold independently. This lost the firm their stipulated commission, the inference being that the artist had

someone who saw his work in the Hamlin gallery and who suggested that the artist sell direct and thus reduce the sale price and yet add to his own profits. Jones contended this was unethical. Artists placing canvases with the firm should sign an agreement to the effect that within a certain time limit they would not dispose of said canvases without paying the firm their commission.

"It is such a cheat," Jones expostulated, "take this last case," citing that of a canvas "filched" from the store and resold the following day to a club at two hundred dollars less than the store had been asking, "this chap makes an extra hundred, the buyer saves a hundred—we have exhibited the picture, advertised and believed in it, yet we are let out with a vacant space on the wall for some one else to try the same game."

Hamlin took issue. Like all men who have never experienced poverty, he was inconsistent, strangely generous in some ways, penurious to absurdity in others. This matter he regarded as "being fair to artists."

"See here," he began, "suppose I hired clerks only on a commission basis and one happened to sell a fifteen hundred dollar article and another a fifty cent tube of paste—could I expect harmony? No, I pay salaries to insure a living wage and then allow commissions. In the main, the artists who exhibit with us are not selling outside—they leave their stuff here for months, sometimes years and depend on our effects to make a sale, precluding other channels.

When they do sell, I take a commission. I therefore say when an artist has a chance to sell outside of the store, he has my permission to do so."

"That isn't business, sir," Jones was determined to win, "the artist walks in here, retrieves his wares and goes around the corner to say: 'I got this back from Hamlin's—let's forget his commission and split the price.' It will ruin our art department, artists will soon enough catch on, we'll be a laughing stock."

The blind eyes peered at the floor of silky rugs which happened to have recently been unrolled ready for their price tags.

"I have no intention of making any such restriction," he remarked bombastically.

"But, sir, if it was any other department you would—" Jones stuck to his guns.

Hamlin had risen and was walking away. Jones followed.

"All arts as well as all civilizations have laws which must be observed—I ask you to question any man in the store and see if they would not agree with me."

"There has been some trouble regarding the vases purchased by Mrs. Bankhead," was Hamlin's answer, "will you appease the lady's feelings? If you decide it is necessary, we stand ready to make good." He ignored the argument. "Better walk over to the graphic arts building and view the apple butter, become calm," was his whimsical ending.

Indignant, Jones took himself to the ceramic de-

partment to investigate the Bankhead affair. One of the recently acquired vases was found to be cracked, it had been damaged after leaving the store —which Mrs. Bankhead well knew. Since there was no possibility of her passing them off as antiques, she had returned them and demanded a refund.

After a hectic telephone conversation in which Mrs. Bankhead impressed upon him her social importance, that she stood ready to disrupt the reputation of his firm without delay, Jones agreed to see what could be done. He took a taxi to a far end of town where Saki, a Japanese wizard in the art of mending, lived. Had Saki not been hopelessly addicted to the pipe, he would have been on the firm's payroll. But after several attempts of employing him, with unfortunate lapses of attention and the disappearance of valuable objects, Jones had let him go, only calling for his services as a last resort.

Saki was very amiable, having had a pleasant siesta with the pipe. He agreed to mend the vase. Threatening him with nothing less than arrest if he failed to do so, Jones returned to the store in time to be dragged into further arguments. He left at five o'clock, discharging a dishonest clerk as his last duty and arrived at the apartment to find his mother enjoying a new dilemma.

Owen had the measles! The doctor was considerate enough not to placard them, he understood what excellent care the boy would have, etc. He had sent a smart young person in nurse's uniform who was tiptoeing about superciliously and who smiled her

sweetest at Jones. Household activities were suspended for the time being while young Owen, very lobstery of hue, enjoyed endless attentions.

Where he contracted the disease was what worried Martha. Had he been under Pat's careless supervision, she could have said, "I told you so" but with her never-ending vigil, how could he have acquired such a humiliating thing as a measle germ?

"Oh, children attract that sort of stuff," Jones refused to take the situation seriously, "he'll have mumps and chickenpox and Sunday fishing fever and runawayitis, lots of things. Don't you remember how we had such ailments, sometimes all three of us at one fell swoop? The time we were all in bed with old fashioned sore throats and fever and you had to sew for the Parker girls' twin wedding?"

"And the water pipes froze and your father laid in bed like a log and let me take care of you and do everything else!"

"And we had neither doctor or nurse but got well in short order, a fine old bedlum it was. You bet I remember."

"That was a hard pull," Martha forgot the immediate catastrophe, "the muscles of my back have never been right since—I did so much lifting, I even helped the plumbers. My, the neighbors were good to me—of all the custard and soup they carted in, even old Mrs. Pierson who never tolerated children. I guess a body is never given more to stand than they are able . . . but this nurse," returning to the

present, "is lazy. Afraid of soiling her white aprons. A lot she cares for children, a rich widower is the patient she hankers for—she has spent half her time looking at your belongings, 'just dying to meet you'—" Martha's little face was forbidding, "she treats Owen as if he were made of wood—and I'm to keep my hands off."

"That's good—it may wean Owen from his doting grandmother," Jones kissed her to sugarcoat the pill, "he'll come through in fine shape—just let the nurse have full sway. I won't be home for dinner, that's one worry off your mind."

"Won't you?" distinctly disappointed, "I roasted a chicken, I didn't want you to feel that your comfort was disturbed because the baby was sick. That wouldn't be fair. I've a canned elderberry pie, too—you like that. I suppose the nurse eats with us, not a dish will she wash unless I'm greatly mistaken. Well—are you going to go out or stay with us?"

"I must go—a club thing," Jones was vague and impatient, "is that some medicine she is using—the place smells like a drug store. I'll leave you and the nurse to quarrel over the chicken wishbone and tell me about it tomorrow."

He went into the nursery to glimpse the situation. Owen and the nurse were endeavoring to tolerate each other. As soon as Jones appeared, the nurse began cooing about "her sick lamb, yes, he was—a sick lamb."

Jones fled. The measles incident added another reason for his being considered such a good brother

and son, he would be thanked for paying the paltry bills. He almost preferred being called a selfish cad just by way of contrast. Only he lacked the courage to go about it!

CHAPTER XX

When he saw Bertha in cheap finery and hilarious spirits, he wanted to do no less than kiss her. She was so commonplace, with none of the cobwebby introspection which threatened his common sense. She was unfeignedly happy to see him, she even scolded because he was late.

"Couldn't help it, my dear girl," replied Jones as they sat at a secluded table, the waiter fondling a bill as a reward for steering them thusly, "my kid nephew has the measles—family calamity! Perhaps I ought not have told you—you may be afraid of germs."

Bertha's white teeth flashed an amused smile. "Measles? My stars, I've even had the black kind —I'm not afraid of anything except cockroaches and getting too fat! I'm that hungry I could eat a house," breaking off a breadstick to crunch at it with a relish.

"Good for you! Two martini cocktails," he ordered as the beginning of their menu. "You look awfully nice," as the waiter departed, "a man has to be worthy of a pal like you, doesn't he?"

"That's what I wanted to talk about," was her

quick reply. "I'm no school girl—neither are you just approaching man's estate—and I like you, I guess that's no secret, is it?"

"Not any more than the fact of my liking you," the festive atmosphere of the restaurant coupled with sentimental piano music made him reckless in statements. What he liked was what Bertha typified.

After a second cocktail, Bertha expounded her views a trifle more vehemently than was her wont. "I told you I been fooled by a man," she said in part, "and it made me wise. Now I'm not thinking a man like you would want to marry me—when you can marry any sort of girl you like," she understood the art of flattery, "but you seem to like my style. What I'm getting at is this: are you fooling with me for a few weeks or do you want to be pals? Are you in love with someone else—or married? A girl gets so she ain't surprised at anything these days. Who are you, anyhow? 'Fess up," leaning across the table, her red lips in an attractive pout. "I'm not like Poppy—wanting to be married. I choose romance, the same as in a play."

Bertha craved glamour but did not know how to express it. In exchange for the glamour Jones could give, Bertha could lend him the illusion that he did not care for marriage, since he had a cheaply attractive comradeship removed from family and business horizons. Bertha was no young girl with a heart to bruise, ideals to destroy. He would be blameless. And upon this tragic foundation of insincerity, they proceeded,—with Bertha secretly hoping, as all

women always hope and always will, that she would become so indispensable to Jones he would marry her. And with Jones happier than he ever remembered as he listened to Bertha's outpourings of her past hardships and injustices—then a rather hesitating admission that her affair with Jo Willard had been of more alarming proportions than the first expurgated version, that she knew, in truth, all she was about when she told Jones she was willing to be pals.

During the next hour, Jones was informed as to the ways of girls circumstanced such as Bertha. Those endowed with a gift for trimming hats or doomed to stand behind store counters, thus barred from matrimonial prospects, took to public dances and saw to it that they became pals, as good a word as any, with their various escorts, gradually causing them to feel a sense of loyalty and, more often than not, marriage would be the final outcome. Bertha saw in Jones a "swell fellow who was tied to his family's apron strings" but, perhaps, who knows—among her set, she was making a legitimate endeavour. Since Jones had paid her attention, she could afford to turn up her nose at truck drivers or clerks who flirted with her spasmodically but "who never spent anything but the evening" as Poppy had pointed out.

Bertha realized that Jones liked being treated in a buoyant, hail-fellow-well-met fashion, he liked her boisterous cheer, a letdown from being with "swells and swell things" as she knew his business demanded.

On the other hand, the craving for romance and beautiful things which tortured Bertha would be appeased. Why consult Madame Grundy as to the affair?

By degrees, Jones found himself telling something of his family which needed his moral and financial support, although the terrible noon-day stress was passed. He had never hoped to find anyone like Bertha, willing to accept this viewpoint, be comfortably in love with him and satisfied with the arrangements which followed. On the other hand he assured her:

"I'm not a man who will suddenly desert you for a stranger, I'll be loyal—only you must understand that I can't marry and I don't want to interfere with your doing so, should occasion arise. We can have jolly times together—in our own way. Is that satisfactory?" Jones felt a trifle uncertain as to this, he did not see how such a situation could endure—nor how it could terminate pleasantly. But Bertha interrupted:

"I can tell of girls at my shop—nice girls, too—who have friends like you. It's only the girls who will marry some twelve dollar a week guy that lose out. I've learned that," shaking her head. Her dark eyes betrayed a greedy glitter. "In my set, it is nobody's business what they do. Poppy and Fred will come to see me more if you are my friend, because I can do more nice things for them—that's human nature, ain't it? Of course I don't expect to know your family or friends—and I guess it

won't bother me much. I'm satisfied with liking you —you were a gentleman from the start."

He held out his hand. Unseen by the others, she laid her thick, red hand on it. He bent over to kiss it. "Here's to loyalty," he said, "but remember, if the time comes when you want to marry—you must do so. Just as if I were not about. I'll never want to marry," with masculine stupidity, "so it's a go."

"I'll agree to that," laughed Bertha, congratulating herself.

When Jones left Bertha, he found himself amused at recalling Hamlin's attitude as to artists and commissions, tolerant at Mrs. Bankhead's cheating and Saki's uncertain habits, tenderness itself to the family. He fancied he had re-arranged his life so as to harm no one but make himself happy.

Bertha was to find an east side apartment and furnish it like "I always wanted," including cut glass, a player piano, already she planned to overshadow Poppy's bridal splendor. Jones was to be on en famille terms, to enjoy the bohemian, careless living which should follow. Bertha must substantiate her boast of being as good a German cook as her mother had been and as fine a flirt as her old Irish dad! She was to continue in the millinery department but she would have no cause to be concerned as to her position. Her wish for a wrist watch and a diamond ring stood an excellent chance of being satisfied. It was quite romantic and unreal —quite absurd as both refused to admit.

Having passed the first charm of youth, removed from social settings, Bertha was hopeless as regarded matrimony unless through such an avenue as Jones himself. He was perfectly fair prey and she was sincere in her loyalty and gratitude. She would keep her part of the bargain—and she would see that he kept his!

Coming home after midnight, Jones found his mother waiting up. She wore an old dressing gown he particularly disliked, her fine hair plaited into two ridiculous pigtails.

"I wanted to tell you Owen's fever has gone—seems miraculous. He will have to be careful about bright lights and food, but that doctor is a wizard. Was the club thing stupid, my dear? I declare, I felt lonely—as if Owen wasn't on my mind."

Jones kissed her. "That's fine news—good for the old topper. I'll buy him a rocking horse to celebrate. I'm sorry you were lonely—yes, it was extremely stupid—extremely. I'm going to buy you the handsomest gown of fragile gray tulle I can find—you must wear it at Marian's wedding."

"Oh, Jones, you're so good," she sighed, her eyes searching his meaningly, "and you work so hard—what should we all do without you!"

CHAPTER XXI

MARIAN'S wedding was but mildly interesting to Jones, having dutifully given away the bride and properly impressed the future in-laws. He was glad she had not come to his apartment to be married, she harmonized too well with the intellectual atmosphere.

Jones had speculated correctly regarding his brother-in-law, a shabby, estimable student, useless outside his own limited boundaries, priceless within them—and perfectly content this was so.

The Varleys would live happily ever after in their shabby brown cottage which they proudly displayed to Jones—a peaceful if somewhat narrowed horizon.

The Varley "girls" were the helpful Harriet type of persons, given to tortoise shell rimmed glasses and determined shoes, telling others how best to broach life's cargo. They regarded Jones as a fascinating and complex personality. They stood up with Marian who made as lovely a bride in her web of creamy lace, so Jones described it, as the campus had ever called its own. Although the bridegroom forgot his necktie, the ceremony being delayed until the loss was remedied and, at its conclusion, kicked over an umbrella jar of holly in his excitement, the affair was counted a success.

This scholastic setting brought startling changes of opinion to Martha. She felt out of things. Save for her modish frock, she typified the person who has done the drudgery. The barrier of education which Martha so bravely erected between her daughter and herself was insurmountable. Marian would be kind, wincing at the word, but never sympathetic. Yet she was so happily removed from her mother's world that Martha could not begrudge her joy.

No one paid Martha attention—she was the bride's mother. Even the sisters-in-law came in for homage. They had trained if amusingly pragmatic minds. Measles or how to can vegetables successfully did not intrigue their brain cells to the exclusion of world topics. Although they had stinted they had never been denied necessities, or been forced into intimate contact with one's inferiors. Herein was a telling difference!

Martha was glad when she was on the train bound for home. The Varleys were to waste no money. Only to Boston for the rest of the week and then home to the brown cottage. Here, "too happy to be true" Marian was to begin her battle with pots and pans.

"I'm sure to come croppers as a faculty man's wife," she told her brother, "such as the right time of leaving after a sorority dinner or when to call on the president's wife. But everyone respects Robert so much they will excuse my shortcomings. I'm too happy to mind, anyway—and I owe it all to you, blessed boy of boys! Tell Pat I'll write soon."

"You didn't mind her not coming?" he took occasion to ask.

"Dear, no," Marian shook her head, "Pat would have been almost as awkward as mother—no one could have helped it. You understand, Jones—you're splendid to mother, smoothing the way and making everyone be nice to her." It still rankled with Marian, to her own horror, that she lacked a family record of social importance.

"Keep happy," Jones said at parting, "don't thank me too much or you'll grow to hate me—truly! You are no less my sister because you are Robert's wife and I want you to feel I am with you in whatever you may wish to do. Let me share and help as always."

"And I must live up to Robert's ideals," blind to her brother's altruism, "I'm afraid I'm not worthy of him, sometimes."

"See that he lives down to your sensible ideas," Jones suggested, "remember a balloon needs an anchor. Don't persuade yourself you are not good enough—a college professor is as liable to be a great baby over a toothache as an impecunious art dealer. These intellectuals who, when they do not know how to express themselves otherwise, label things as being 'significant' and their daily tasks as 'my great privilege'—they are all possessed of an Achilles' heel."

As he traveled homeward, he found himself vaguely wishing he, too, was master in a shabby brown cottage and was essential to someone who

wore a new gold ring. Still, Bertha was waiting as eagerly as Marian did for her husband. She was to move into the apartment the first of the year. Never before had business proved more successful. Pat seemed to be settled and away and his mother had told him, not an hour ago, she was happier than she ever hoped to be. What was it happened to the man who asked for everything his heart could wish for, Jones asked himself, as Martha fussed about the tip he bestowed on an indolent porter.

He did not recall the answer until they neared Cornwall. To be sure—the man who asked for everything his heart desired and had been given it without reservation had died of heart failure!

. . . . . .

Jones was too absorbed in Bertha and their careless times to notice the change in his mother. Likewise, Martha, occupied with her struggle of "catching up," did not note Jones' indifference. At another time she would have seen that he was absent more than usual, distraught, careless as to how his household was ordered. He had no leisure for personal talks during which they would discuss everything from Plato to potato pancakes, Martha expressing her views as forcibly as if she were handing down some decision from the supreme bench. Jones never made her feel her bromidic reactions were anything but startlingly "significant." He shared her memories with a chivalrous patience and paid her graceful tributes in the bargain.

Martha, herself, had no time for such confidences. Even Pat's letters about her marvelous success and her hints of wanting her son with her did not provoke family debate. Marian's letters, so happy one reread them merely for vicarious joy, were taken as a matter of course.

But the time was soon when Martha should observe her son's distraitness and Jones be forced to consider his mother's efforts. While blizzards gripped the country and sleighbells jangled, Jones and Bertha had established their friendship with the sanction of Bertha's friends and good-natured winks of understanding by Jones' associates.

According to the clubmen, Jones was bound to cut loose, a wonder he had not done so long ago. They considered Bertha a mediocre young woman, fortunate in ensnaring Bynight. They wondered at his preference for such a person whose idea of a lady was evolved from white kid gloves and synthetic perfumes whereas Jones' hidden dream was of someone suggesting a charming, pastel atmosphere. They would never have suspected he would select this barmaid type who could cook beefsteak and onions instead of sing French chansons. Still, it was Jones' concern.

Jones took some of them up to the flat where they held riotous evenings with Bertha as cook and entertainer combined. They ate her excellent meals and listened politely while her strong white fingers thumped out ragtime melodies on the new piano. Bertha usually had some of "her girl friends" to

meet these men and here both enjoyed a camaraderie at least more honest than when each set went its repressed, often stupid way. Men understood Jones could not marry because of family obligations, a few congratulated him, others shrugged their shoulders as if not caring to prophecy as to the outcome. Jones was fine of soul, keen of brain, common of birth. A difficult trinity of endowments to harmonize.

Bertha did not like his friends, they understood her too well. She had set to work to become indispensable to Jones, preclude his ever knowing anyone else. To do so, she had begun subtly yet persistently to impress upon him the fact of all she jeopardized in order to become his pal. She regretted she had had to admit former indiscretion in order to foster the alliance! But she never referred to it. Bertha's material greed was appeased. Coupled with this greed was a parasitical element which, like the daughter of a peasant, was often paramount when in an American environment. She would not undergo the strain of hard work which she was fitted to undergo. A husband of her own kind would have imposed the hardships of housekeeping, child-bearing and rearing and she congratulated herself at escaping them. She still worked at the millinery trade—but only at half time. Indeed, she wished Jones would spend more time going to cheap theaters and restaurants or at the flat. She found him generous and a gentleman. He never knew Bertha was given to being "frowsy" when alone, unlovely of appear-

ance, eating off a corner of the kitchen sink or enjoying impossible gossip with neighbors. When he was about, she was carefully dressed and adopted a sentimental, lonely air unless she drank and became hilarious. She made it a point to tell Jones that whatever she purchased cost at least twice its price. He never doubted her, which delighted Bertha since now she had a secret bank account.

Poppy, who was to be married at Easter time, was undecided how to accept the change in events. She envied Bertha's prosperity. She knew, as do women of her sort, this affair even enhanced Bertha's ultimate opportunity for marriage. Bertha was having advantages! But Poppy secretly hoped Jones would fall in love and Bertha would learn of it and create havoc. Poppy would enjoy the resulting warfare. She had made inquiries as to the Bynight family and, to her disappointment, found that Jones had told Bertha the truth. As yet, there was nothing to tattle.

"I hope he don't tire of you," she said, shortly before her wedding, "if Fred or me get sore—we can tell our troubles to the court."

Bertha tossed her head. "As long as his mother lives, he'll never look at anyone but me."

"His family don't know how selfish they are, do they?"

"Oh, I don't call it that," Bertha resented the criticism, "I guess they did enough for him—and it suits him, anyhow. Jones is queer—he is like two people in one, the man who is in business and with

his family and the man who comes here. He likes being two people, I suppose. When he's here, he forgets his worries and troubles. I see to that."

Poppy was examining the contents of a bookcase. "Lend me this," she asked, selecting a sob-thriller, "my, you've a lot of books—but, say, Jones never tries to give you the handsome stuff he has in his own place—educated things, you know."

Bertha's cheeks flushed. "I select my own stuff —if I wanted old brass and jade, I could have it. Didn't I just tell you he likes to get away from business—my stuff amuses him."

"Wow!" said Poppy, "somebody's peeved. I suppose you won't stand up with me."

"I'll stand up—and pity you," Bertha condescended, "I wouldn't trade places with a queen. I don't see much in Fred and of all the Christmas presents you two exchanged—my, but Jones did laugh——"

It was Poppy's turn to flush. For she had given Fred a gold toothpick, she had won it at a public card party, and he had paid for having her hair permanently waved! Poppy knew Bertha had industriously made Jones silk shirts, monogramming them in king's blue while he had slipped a diamond solitaire on her finger which put to shame Poppy's reconstructed ruby.

"Well, forget it," proposed that lady goodnaturedly, in view of the wedding gift Jones promised, "it's live and let live in this world!"

CHAPTER XXII

MARTHA was struggling, unsuspected, to keep pace with present-day demands. Marian's wedding had driven home the truth concerning her lacks. She came nome to study her son's apartment, visit his beautiful store, meet his friends and watch his social activities only to realize she had no fitting place in them. People were polite but beyond discussing the weather, they had nothing to say to her. She was no longer of importance because there was no more drudgery to do. She was slightly impossible.

Therefore, she must revive her once excellent mind, as well as manicure her nails, soften her voice and no longer be guilty of poking meat at markets to ascertain its tenderness. Her annoying habit of going about dressed in seconds must be broken—it displeased Jones who reminded her there was no need of doing so. Yet it was a hard habit to break, hard to know which clothes to buy, how to start new interests, win new friends yet not offend the old. She seemed socially pensioned, placed in a comfortable yet sidetracked position. He had owed his mother everything in the past—but

it was the present with which she wanted to be concerned.

Would this come about? She entertained a sentimental hurt about her plight, felt personally slighted and angered because the flippant gentlefolk played so much harder than they had ever worked and seemed to be quite the rage. Why should they escape toil and sacrifice? All very well for women who never ate breakfast before nine to age graciously and be called a lovely dowager, radiant in plum-colored satins and lace of family history. But they could not have done so had they battled through Martha's problems. There seemed a stigma in having to remember sifting ashes or going after ice in a dishpan because one could not afford regular tickets and an ice box!

She had decided not to visit Marian until she had changed in manner. Her old friends puzzled her because their attitude seemed that of envy. Theirs was the standard of gaining from the rich—they could not comprehend her desire to be on an equal footing.

"Can't you get used to things, mater?" Jones would urge, when his mother wore shoes with run-down heels or forgot the finger bowls, "enjoy these things or else criticize them intelligently——"

"I can't, honey," she would confess, "I know all your things are mighty fine—but I don't understand them as I did my old truck."

Here would follow useless debate.

Martha wrote Pat for toilet cosmetics and also

bought a set of books, one of those hoaxes instituted by cheerful liars who claim to bring culture to the doorstep by paying two dollars down and a dollar per. She read the books industriously—and went to lectures unobserved, trying to acquire the manners of Jones' friends. She attempted to neglect her grandson with proper hauteur but was conscious of failure. No one paid any heed to her progress—proof enough of its unimportance.

At one time Jones' friends sent their mothers and wives to call but the calls had been unendurable with Martha telling family secrets or expressing maternal pride in too ultra a fashion. "Just salt of the earth she is—and as true blue as Jones himself but impossible. She does not play bridge or go in for social reform and I didn't dare ask her to join the opera reading club. I'm sure I don't know what she does. Perhaps she is orthodox in religion—her clothes would indicate it."

Yet her loneliness had become oppressive, the boredom of a domestic rut without responsibility or struggle was driving her to unwise avenues of escape. One afternoon she went to a matinee of the season's most shocking play. She bought herself rouge and false curls and had a facial massage before she did so. But many of the risqué points escaped her and it was dreary to go alone. When she flaunted a new costume of a white satin waist and a striped black and white skirt with sapphire colored slippers to proclaim her individualistic temperament as the saleswoman assured her was the

present rage, she perked up courage to return some of the calls. But she could see the people were amused by her and interested in Jones. She could not discuss his work intelligently, even pronounce some of the names. So, losing courage, she came home and laid aside the new costume and washed off the rouge, partly by tears, taking to her old clothes and buying paper roses for the hall table!

Her inability to achieve seemed to destroy her bustling, cheery personality. In its place was a weary pessimist who realized she had been originally intended to the things her son had achieved. Had she been born in a different setting she might have become one of "Cornwall's gracious dowagers," etc. Therein lay the deepest hurt.

Jones did not perceive this melancholy. He was away much of the time and was always at his store's command even when he came home. She was indignant that he worked so hard but he assured her, his conscience now well trained, that he was content.

Before Poppy's wedding Martha became imbued with cults, the last avenue of progress available. The fantastic world of psychic phenomena won her attention, lent her a sense of superiority. She bought endless books upon spirit phenomena and mediumship, the persual of which caused her to forget her social defeat.

It was not long before Martha believed she was a medium. She had a ouija board and also endeavored to obtain spirit rappings. She gained nothing of import from these efforts any more than from au-

tomatic writings but it afforded personal satisfaction. Jones was ignorant of what was transpiring until he could not but be confronted with spiritualistic literature no matter which way he turned.

He finally hauled out the ouija board in derision. "I say, mother, you are coming on," was his opinion, "what nonsense! Better re-read Dickens or take lessons in symbolic dancing, anything but this," the fact of Poppy's aunt, palpably a fraud, added to his disapproval. He often felt it a hardship to endure Bertha's friends.

Martha enlightened him as to her powers. "You should not laugh at what is a sincere belief," she reproved, "at least, it gives me an interest—and I am quite on my own resources."

Jones felt remorse. "That is so, shall we do a theater a week from now on—say on Wednesdays? It will do you good, you've had the boy so much and me a constant runaway. No wonder you felt spooks were better comrades than your own family. But I warn you, there is nothing to be gained from it."

"Do you deny there is spirit communication after what we name as death?"

"Not at all but I deny that we have as yet established it to be a scientific fact—or that it would count for overly much if we did so. Fraud and morbid hallucinations combine to make spiritualists. No healthy minded persons wish to call back the dead."

Martha was silent.

"Not that I want to discourage you, only it isn't

wise," he added, "by the way, as soon as I can get time, I'm going to build a house on the outskirts—at Hillside—about a two-acre lawn and garden and a homey lodge. That will banish fobias—when you dig in your garden and listen to the chickens crow. We are crowded here, I want a studio room on the third floor of my house."

"Are you going back to painting?"

"No, start the art journal as soon as Hamlin will see it. As I'm to be editor I want my 'brain cell' at home. Then we must have a huge living room where a life-sized fireplace feels at home—lots of rooms and things. I have been talking with an architect, he is going to draw plans. Your rooms shall be just as you say, so begin deciding about what you are going to want."

"It seems foolish to have a country house for two people," was her objection, "even if the boy stays with us. I want you to save money."

But Jones would not listen. If a person wished a houseboat on the Nile, a California bungalow and a New York brownstone front—they should have them all was his argument. For himself, he was weary of apartments and dumb waiters and a composite smell of cookery. He wanted to be able to have week-end guests as well as week-end retirements from the world. At any rate, he was going to build!

As for spiritualism—a bàs! The next day he sent up some new novels and arranged for her to drive with her grandson every afternoon.

"Dear boy," Martha thought, "it has come to be

his giving and my taking, it was easier when I gave and he accepted."

Unbeknownst to him she continued her interest in spiritualism.

CHAPTER XXIII

Poppy's wedding was a gay affair with Poppy's aunt in anything but a trance as she exclaimed over Jones' gift of an oriental rug and drank his champagne. Jones was amused. He found that Bertha's friends accepted him as one of them, with polite lack of explanations concerning his attitude towards Bertha. As long as he remained a benefactor to all, they would be "more fool than wise man to ask questions" Fred Flynn had argued.

As soon as was polite, Jones and Bertha left the wedding party to return to Bertha's flat, in a small, east side apartment house, the tenants of which kept rather to themselves.

"It is more fun to be alone," Bertha flattered as she began to get supper, "didn't Poppy look old when the sun streamed in on her face? Well, sir, what shall it be—steak or omelette?" She tied an apron about her costume of white silk with its scarlet leather panels for contrast.

"Omelette, but come talk to me first," he suggested. He had taken an easy chair by the window. "You're worth a dozen Poppies—I'm not hopeful as to Fred's future peace of mind, his wife is inclined to be a

shrew. I don't believe they'll be as good pals as we are," he tried to draw her down onto his knee.

Bertha refused. "But they're not playing with each other," was her unexpected objection, "it is solemn to stand up before a minister and promise things. We didn't."

"We promised each other," he refuted, "you look very handsome this evening; of course you never suspected such a thing, did you?"

"Those promises would be a lot of use if we didn't chose to keep them," ignoring the compliment, "sometimes I'm awfully mad at you because you think I'm just at your beck and call—you don't tell me anything that would make me different—smarter," she struggled to explain, "you never confide about business or what you're reading or thinking. I'm no fool."

"I thought I did the things you liked—you said so."

"Maybe you do. That fool wedding makes me feel queer," her heavy brows were scowling in a straight line, "I felt such an outsider, as if I had wasted all my chances. I wouldn't have felt that way," suddenly kneeling beside him, "if I hadn't learned to like you awfully well. I liked you well enough when we met but not as I do now—I'm afraid I was thinking more about what you would give me than about yourself. Today, it came over me all of a sudden that I liked you—and I was jealous because you didn't share your real thoughts with me—there, you know! Oh, Jones, promise you'll

never go back on what you said—it would hurt like the very devil," giving way to heavy sobs.

"Are you getting up a scene because Poppy is married?" his tone was unconcerned, slightly displeased. He lit a cigar.

"It makes me realize that I care for you like Poppy ought to care for Fred but doesn't and that she is married and I'm not and it ain't fair. It never pays to get crazy about a man, but I've done it again."

Jones forced her to kiss him. "I like you," he answered, "there's nothing to worry about. Now you are going to make the best omelette in the world and watch me eat the biggest share of it."

He was amazed at his own displeasure, as unsuspected on his part as had been Bertha's love declaration.

"See here, tears are no fair," he began walking up and down, wishing he were out of the place. Would she never stop crying—and cook his omelette—or must she keep on enjoying melodrama during which he would reveal further unworthy masculine depths? What sort of an insincere beast was he?

Bertha hesitated; struggling between the feminine desire to win tender pledges and the mundane knowledge that an omelette served with coffee and kisses would win her an Easter bonnet, she went towards the kitchen door, turning to watch his promenade.

"Here goes for the omelette," she announced, "I guess Mrs. Templeton's spooks must have followed me home."

Despite this tearyful post-wedding episode Jones found satisfaction in the affair. It proved a never-failing safety valve for nerves and overworked brain. Bertha, meantime, had her new Easter hat and a silver mesh bag besides. She saw to it that Jones became almost sentimental over the exquisitely made handkerchiefs with odd silk monograms.

"These mean a lot of time and eyesight," he praised, "I must appreciate them. You're a fine sort, Bertha—let's go to the theater to celebrate."

"Splendid," she agreed, coming over to rest her gypsy head on his arm, one strong hand reaching up to rumple his hair. "You're a nice boy," she murmured, "I hate to see that line growing between your eyebrows because Mrs. Templeton says a phrenologist or some such bug told her it meant a bad temper —you haven't one, have you? I'm the person to hurl rolling pins," laughing at the truthful admission.

They were at Bertha's flat, Jones having excused himself from a family dinner and evening.

"You don't know me," he warned, kissing her, "if I ever got started, I'm afraid I'd match the rolling pin with a battle-axe. That line means I need stronger glasses, some of my work is so damnably fine."

"I suppose," she stood back, her hands on her hips in gypsy style.

"Come on, what is it now? Let's settle all scores," he teased.

"Why don't you ever ask me to appreciate your art stuff?" she asked. "Your mother doesn't know

any more about jade and parchments and tapestries than I do—you said she didn't. I suppose you treat her like a queen when she comes to see your displays."

"Let us leave her out of this," his tone suggested finality.

But Bertha swept on. "Not that I'm gone on the things you deal in—if they are hi-brow, gimme the half-wit furnishings. But I don't like being snubbed. You don't want me to come and exclaim over your sacred stock. Suppose I came anyway—how would you treat me?"

"I'd be happy to see you," furious at himself for getting into the box. "Only, why come? Because of a jealous desire to dominate? You think I don't understand? You know part of me, Bertha, and my family another part and the store a third—quite a dissected old party! Each personality is quite removed from the other—so why infringe? Why not ask why I don't ask you to club smokers or directors' meetings? Aren't we too good pals to have unpleasant ripples? Why pick flaws in what ought to be satisfactory to both of us?" Jones was polite but his voice betrayed an alarming indifference.

Bertha admired his decision. She wanted things with the intensity of a stupid child who cries for the moon but does not take into account that said moon would be of no use if she could have it.

"I hate to feel out of things," was her protest, giving way to the age-old weapon—tears. "You

got the climbing habit when you were young—that's the only reason you're so far ahead of me now. I was too cowed to have it. Sometimes I'm awfully blue for fear I'll grow old and be all alone—you have friends and assured position. I don't say it right, only I'm darned unhappy some days and damned happy others," she ended with characteristic boisterousness.

"Oh—the roast is burning," she cried a moment later, darting away.

Jones did not applaud her return to good-nature. He was appreciative of the coming roast, the warm room with it's bright comforts—pots of flowers she coaxed into blooming, a cage of birds which were her chief pride. He realized that this setting and his right to come and go at will contributed in a sense to his being a success as had his mother's early struggles, college days, Hamlin's patronage. All part of the mosaic! This compromise of knowing Bertha was like, his lip curled in scorn, a wild animal taken from the jungle and placed in a zoo with painted scenery of his native habitat and a chunk of raw beef as compromises. So with Bertha and her flat as compared to Jones' real dreams of a home. There still lingered a confused longing for things of tender dimensions. Had he been able to marry—but why debate the impossible? Always there would be the triple rôle—the art dealer, his mother's faithful son, Bertha's pal. At times it seemed an unfair tangle, again a fairly satisfactory division of life interests.

But at this moment he began realizing that Bertha was not an easily silenced person. She hummed as she moved about to finish her dinner. The "brain storm" as she said had passed, leaving her unusually light hearted. Poppy and Fred were coming to dinner after which they were to go to a theater. Why worry about tomorrow? Tra-la-la. She must see the gravy was thick as Jones liked—tumty-tum-tum—Poppy would envy her new frock of slashed black and red satin panels—ta-ta-ta—a lot she cared for art stores and goodygoody mothers who thought themselves the sum total of their son's existence—ta-tra-la. . . .

Watching her through the half opened door, Jones was impressed with her gypsy similarity. But a gypsy must be young and virile or picturesquely old and ugly, there was no charming middle stage of mental and spiritual youth—and Bertha was doomed to become picturesquely old!

The doorbell rang just then to announce the Flynns and Jones forgot unpleasant speculations because of the excellence of the roast and gravy.

CHAPTER XXIV

MARTHA'S efforts having met without success, she ceased striving to know people beyond a surface acquaintance. She was Jones Bynight's mother, deserving of courtesy. These same persons who cultivated her son would have regarded her with scorn had she, per se, tried to become intimate.

"The only person who thinks I'm important is little Owen," she told herself after reading one of Marian's dutiful letters which dilated on the thrilling subject of making popovers from sour milk. "It won't be long before he'll call grandma an old fuss. I hope Pat sends for him."

She began darning Jones' gloves. As she did so, she recalled how many times she had patched and darned—almost woven—to make her little brood comfortable. What hard yet splendid years those were. One did not wear an afternoon gown of wisteria satin and sit in a drawing room to entertain callers. True enough—but after the callers were gone and one re-read their names on bits of glossy cardboard, it meant nothing to her. Not as much as her name had meant to them—for they could criticize and debate as to Mrs. Bynight while she was disinterested, uninformed.

Those other days when apple sauce for dessert

was cause for family rejoicing and Martha wore her husband's old hats to do the backyard work, she had had worth-while callers who came at odd, unannounced hours. They came because of distress or to share some joy. Perhaps it was only a new kind of preserve. Or they needed advice, her brave view of life and duty. They wore gingham dresses, these other callers, and sat in kitchen chairs and sometimes they leaned tired, bewildered heads down on the table, as they sobbed out their errand. But it had been splendid as contrasted with this evaporated, polite hypocrisy of "so glad to come" and "charmed, Mrs. Bynight——" Ah, Martha had mattered that other time. Even if her husband was sleeping off the effect of last night's beer and Pat wailed for new finery while Marian scolded because it was not quiet enough for her to study, Jones, bless his heart, sawing away at kindling in the shed—it had been splendid. She enjoyed being "at home" those days.

Take this dread of going to affairs, stepping timidly down the receiving line to stutter her bromidic greeting and retire with the other nonenities until she might make good her escape. Or accompanying Jones to some function where he felt she must go, Jones being pathetically chivalrous no matter what her remarks.

How different had been her going out of old. Say helping the Sweeneys move by hand at night, thus escaping a tyrant landlord—pushing a cart containing their kitchen tins through an alley only to come into clanging collision with a handcart pushed by the

head of the Steinmetz family who were doing likewise—each certain doom had sounded!

Or that breathless trip to the Waverly household to establish herself as head nurse during the night the oldest boy died. Or finding a bargain special which would be of great use to the family, returning home with renewed courage for having done so. Hers had been the happy consciousness of helping in the affairs of men—as she helped her son to become a member of the Century Club and to wear his tuxedo with the ease she had worn her aprons. Small wonder that Martha now turned to psychic fields for her solace!

Jones regarded this spiritualistic trend with indulgence. He did not recognize it as an admission of social defeat. It had been clear ever since that first visit at college that his mother would not change. As stable as were her virtues—so was her provincialism.

When, nearly a year after Poppy's wedding, Martha betook herself to Mrs. Templeton's for a private sitting, her name having been recommended at a public meeting, Jones found cause to regret he had not surpressed his mother's psychic desires at the outset.

Sitting in the Templeton parlor, the medium being engaged, Martha studied the contents of the colorful room with a tolerant air. She realized how much she had come on for she knew these things to be wretched of quality and taste. Not even in the days of living with Sophia would she have selected

them. Somehow, it jarred her faith in the medium. This was the first cheaply priced faker she had ventured forth to see. There was no pressing question she wished decided, hers was a craving for a larger intellectual life with the sop of pretending communication with such shades as Shakespeare and Milton.

Glancing back of her chair, she rose to take a framed photograph from the wall—a wedding group of Poppy and her husband and their attendants, Jones and a strange girl. A shiver ran through her. Something warned her this picture was significant. Something in Bertha's smiling face turned towards her son horrified and maddened her. Why was he in this group? Why had she never heard of it? How many times had he excused himself from staying home for his dinner—how gay he seemed—and what a common person this was, studying Bertha's countenance.

The folding doors scraped back to disclose Mrs. Templeton, resplendent in satin, waddling forth to welcome Martha.

She had replaced the picture and assumed a disinterested air before this happened. Then she was ushered into the room of the departed shades to sit in suspense while Mrs. Templeton rambled on with the customary phrases: "the dear old man with whiskers—do you recognize him?" "The dear little child who has been for years in the spirit land—do you recognize him or her?" "Is the name of Mary or John familiar—ah, lady, you could be a great medium if you would but develop!"

At last the folding doors scraped back to release her and allow her to place a silver offering in Mrs. Templeton's palm. Martha's eyes kept gazing at the wedding group, this unwelcome reality had cleared her mental field as to psychic delusion. Life was still impelling, one did not have to take to trance mediums to become thrilled.

"Ain't that a sweet picture? I notice you seem taken with it—it is my niece and her husband and a lovely man she got, too. They were married in this very room—see—right between the front windows——"

"How nice," Martha knew she was flushing, "and the others——" Her boy's eyes seemed live, guilty things, "are they relatives?"

"That is Poppy's chum, Bertha Mullen, a fine girl, too, she will make somebody a good wife. The man," Mrs. Templeton simpered with pride, "is one of our city celebrities—manager of the Hamlin art store—smart as a whip, been through college and traveled in the orient and everything—he's one grand fellow," she sighed.

"Oh, yes," Martha said weakly, "his name is——"

"Jones Bynight—queer, ain't it? He gave Poppy the most elegant oriental rug—for its small size you'd hardly believe the price. Of course they was glad but Poppy said she'd have rather had a couple of big rugs, seeing everything else she had was different from the oriental. Still, she can sell it any time she likes, a man told her husband so. It seems the older them rugs gets, the crazier folks is for

them—do you understand it?" Her talent for reading into the souls of men evidently did not detect the mental upheaval taking place with her client.

"It is strange," Martha heard herself saying.

No one else waiting, Mrs. Templeton waxed talkative. "I like Mr. Bynight myself—he thinks a lot of Bertha and does a lot for her, too, a little too much, I'm saying. Him being what he is and she just a milliner and alone in the world. You know how people talk," in a stage whisper.

"What is it he does for her?" Martha demanded.

"Well, I couldn't just say—only she dresses fine and they go to the theater a lot, Poppy and Fred eat supper at Bertha's flat every week regular. Poppy tells me all this—and I hear that he is just grand to his own family, too. They used to be poor as church mice and he has worked his way up. But I think Bertha sort of forgets that she ought to have a regular understanding with him, a girl must watch out these days, isn't that so, lady?"

"Yes, indeed," Martha wondered if she could leave the room without betraying herself.

"Try to come on Tuesday evening—just a small circle—wonderful results. You've great talent yourself, lady, if you'd only develop——"

Martha fled. All the way home she debated what to do, seek out Bertha Mullen and demand some explanation of her or ask her son? What did it mean? Why had he formed a cheap alliance, he, who abhorred any evidence of cheapness, who criticized every detail of his household without reserve?

Then to find him in a wedding group as the escort of a milliner!

Reaching home, she came to no decision. But there was word from Pat that she wanted Owen. She had an apartment and had arranged for help. She felt she had left her son long enough, her mother had done quite enough for both of them, she hoped she would understand and prove that she did by bringing Owen to Chicago herself, then they could have a satisfactory visit. Martha would see she was able to care for the boy.

Martha tossed the letter aside, relieved this was to be. It was time, treasure that he was, that he went to his mother. Perhaps she had given up too much for his interests, neglected Jones, a possible cause for this affair! Martha's attention was focused on Bertha Mullen, not on the losing of her grandson. Incidentally, she abandoned psychic research.

The maid told her Mr. Bynight would not be home for dinner.

"I wish nothing," Martha said sternly, "give Owen his supper and get him off to sleep—I have a headache."

She must wait hours before he returned—returned from taking this Bertha Mullen to the theater perhaps! Furies were roused in Martha's mild self. She must save Jones from Bertha—the reformer and the mother in her were united in purpose. Life was interesting once more, even if tragic. Trivialities vanished as she opened her Bible and then prayed

in the old way for things to happen which had no possible excuse for happening and for things not to happen which were inevitable!

Jones came home at midnight to find his mother as stern as a presiding magistrate.

"My dear," he began, "what is wrong—the boy—the girls——"

She shook her head. His actual presence delayed the outburst. She was timid of demanding details of his personal life, a proper reticence resulted.

"Pat has sent for Owen, she has a woman as housekeeper and a small apartment. Pat needs the boy and he ought to know his mother. Of course I shall miss him but I am not sorry my responsibility has ended."

"Then why are you staring at me with eyes like saucers and cheeks aflame?" Jones tossed off his coat and walked from the room, returning in a mandarin coat of dragon embroidered splendor. "By jove, I'm tired—the thing was a bore—a club smoker always is. Men are as great gossips as women, you should hear them when they get together."

"It is something else—I don't want to pry, only you've always told me everything, haven't you?"

"Naturally—and always will," he was so sincere Martha wondered if this could be some unfair hallucination.

"Something has come to me that——"

"Some gossipy ghost who says I'll die young or raise side whiskers?"

"Oh, it is real," she said suddenly, "and I'm afraid

unwise—I can't bear not having known, being shut out of your life——"

"Then what is it?" he asked, irritated beyond politeness.

"Bertha Mullen."

Jones sank back in his chair. "Oh," he said in a dreary tone, shading his eyes with a powerful, pinky hand, "just Bertha!" He waited for his mother to proceed.

As she explained, she felt a sense of shame—for having discovered the situation. Jones seemed such a tired innocent as he sat listening, his eyes protected from observation. After all, what concern was it of hers?

"It seemed as if you might have mentioned her," she ended, "told of the wedding—it hurt to find that picture, an intimate group, hanging on a medium's parlor wall. And all she said—perhaps I don't make myself clear——"

"Perfectly clear," he dropped his hand and revealed angry eyes that stared accusingly. "I am sorry you made Bertha's acquaintance in such a roundabout way, it was my fault." Since his mother was cognizant of the affair, he must coat it with a veneer of propriety. He could never hurt her. She could not understand—rather, she would refuse to do so. Martha reached her intellectual limitations long before her children were "doing well" as she called it. She was like Mahomet's coffin as far as such progress, suspended between heaven and earth. Those on earth desiring communication must reach

up on tiptoe to her and those in heaven must stoop down.

Like many women who have known life at first hand, Martha inconsistently refused to believe the truth about her own son. Jones was mentally and spiritually apprehended by his mother but as far as human nature went, she was stubbornly blind. Jones was different from other men—he had always been different, he did not care for the things most men did. His life was happily and completely occupied with worthy interests.

Realizing this, as well as realizing that half-truths are always difficult to refute, Jones added calmly:

"I do not care for the Flynns or Mrs. Templeton, they were Bertha's friends, so I am polite as I am to your old friends. As for my doing much for Bertha —that is true. She is a nice sort of working girl whose company I enjoy, a contrast to other things I am obliged to endure."

Martha's eyes filled with tears. She asked herself wherein she had failed, had she not been her son's companion, why must a cheap working girl step between them?

"She is not the kind I would expect you to select," she said bitterly, "you who think your mother impossible at times—oh, I notice your little frowns and looks when I make mistakes in society—you who have made this apartment a thing of artistic achievement—even Mr. Hamlin says it would be worthy of a showcase—and then to take up with that sort!"

Jones leaned forward. "Have you ever thought?"

he began impulsively, "that I've done everything you and the girls asked me to do—gladly—and as I'm a supposedly sane man of mature years, given up the thing that I longed to do, I've the right to do something I want without holding a family council? I'm not angry," more gently as he saw the annoying tears and realized how alike women were—Bertha cried, too when she feared defeat, "but I'm honest. If I choose to know a girl such as I'd want to marry, you would be more distressed than because I know Bertha—yes, you would—you'd soon realize that she would take your place, rob you of your authority—make me feel differently towards you no matter what I intended. You've created such a precious place in my scheme of things, no one shall ever usurp it. And so—I chose Bertha for a recreation. Others might have become golf fiends or globe trotters, more polite pastimes. Bertha amuses me—she also knows I do not intend to marry."

Martha felt more kindly toward the milliner, a trifle guilty.

"Whenever Bertha wants to marry—she can do so with my blessing," he added, "that is all there is to it. I saw no particular reason to rush home and tell you. I've been drunk a good many times but I didn't tattle on myself, I've lost money gambling, made love to women far cheaper than Bertha—and will probably do all three again but it is my own concern. You need not worry or pray about it. All sons and a good many husbands do likewise. Most mothers and wives prefer not to know about it and

it is as wise as any conclusion they could arrive at, I presume. It is also my concern to keep your place unmolested, supreme. Incidentally, I'll have you meet Bertha—sometime. She's nice enough—fond of the green plush side of life. And is this all that has kept you up until midnight?"

"It seemed sufficient to keep me up—but you are probably right," Martha felt there was nothing more to say. She was ashamed to admit that she preferred his knowing Bertha than to marry some well-bred girl who would see that she was politely exiled. She still told herself that her son was different from other men. He did need contrast and whatever kind it happened to be, she was certain he had decided wisely. How wrong had been her snap judgment.

"Only why did you never tell me?" was her final straw of reproach.

"I was afraid you would not understand," was the inane answer.

"I always try to understand——"

"I was afraid you would try too hard," Jones was ironical in spite of himself.

Martha rose. "I don't want you to feel you must not marry because of your mother," she said bravely.

"I'm not interested in marriage," was the brusque assurance.

Martha kissed him good night. "You are a splendid son," she praised, "I wonder if this girl appreciates you!"

"Immensely," he laughed, "now don't appear for breakfast, seeing that I've robbed you of decent

sleep—and don't give things another thought," gently, he led her from the room.

Coming back, he flung himself into his chair and lighted another cigar. "Thank heavens, that is done," he told himself, frowning, "or is it done?" He kept lighting matches and blowing them out, forgetful of his cigar. "Is anything ever done and does anyone ever tell the entire truth to anyone about anything—would it be good taste if they did?" It seemed as if he could conjugate the situation to a nicety: "The truth should be told, is going to be told, must be told—but never is told."

CHAPTER XXV

The next few days found Jones irritable, not wishing to see either Bertha or his mother. He was glad that she decided to take the boy to Pat. He bundled them into a drawing room with plenty of arguments as to why she should stay as long as she liked.

The subject of Bertha had not been mentioned again, it was one of those subjects taboo in the family circle. Bertha was "quite all right" and Jones "knew his own business best." Martha's conscience was clear because she told Jones she did not wish to stand in the way of his marriage. She, too, was glad of the trip which gave her an amazing number of things to disapprove and yet be interested concerning—with Pat's lovely although highly rouged self paramount in the list. She found Pat to be quite capable of taking care of her own and her son's destinies and really enjoying "this snatch with mother" because it was but temporary.

During her absence Jones enjoyed the solitude of his apartment. Martha's personality was removed, although he missed her, paradoxical as it seemed. He gave some dinner parties he had long wanted to have—the guests being the "socially washed" as his mother loved to term them.

They exclaimed over Jones' taste in possessions and enjoyed the evening unmarred by someone not of their exact tempo, probably a thousand times more worthy in a thousand different ways.

"You wonderful bachelor," said one flapper in leaving, "what a temptation you are—you'll have the debutantés in an uproar!"

"We want more parties," the men told him, "a fine little box you have—dog-in-the-manger never to ask us. Don't you like us when we gasp with pleasure?"

"Naturally—but I've had a young nephew here until lately—and my mother is not well. Therefore, the club affairs. But we'll have many parties, never fear," hating himself for the excuses.

Owen's erstwhile nursery he made into a studio-office. The time to start the art journal was near at hand. During this happy interlude he was missed by Bertha; she suspected him of waning interest and dispatched reproachful letters each day and telephoned him at inconvenient intervals.

Her last hysterical phone call brought the promise of his coming to the flat that same evening—at a personal sacrifice. He wanted to revel in a long evening of uninterrupted reading. But Bertha had said the Flynns were coming over to play cards and it would "look queer" if he stayed away. Would he bring some imported cheese—she had everything else necessary for the lunch menu?

That afternoon Jones was guilty of his first dishonesty in business. A woman whose husband had

more money than "was decent" as her intimate friends declared, purchased a modern brass stork under the guise of its being an antique and Jones, in whom she had "explicit confidence" allowed her to do so, crediting the store with several hundred per cent profit and himself with being a thief!

As he was not quite square with his mother or Bertha and incidentally, himself, he was reacting accordingly in his business. He despised himself for the trick, even if the customer never became cognizant of the fraud. He went into Hamlin's office the latter part of the afternoon and confessed the happening.

"I don't like that," Hamlin said quietly, his blind eyes seeming reproachful.

"No more do I. She accepted it as an antique from the time she saw it, felt flattered at her ability to so discern the thing. I let it go. I can't retract it but I'll never have such a thing happen again. I'm tired of selling and buying and buying and selling—I wish I didn't have to hear the words: 'How much' for a year! Everything gets on my nerves, I'm like a fussy old woman who gains her pleasure through petty meanness."

Hamlin put a hand on Jones' arm to "see" wherein lay the trouble. "Try a vacation," he suggested.

"Can't just now—I'm to do Europe for you in the winter. Funny how a thing like the brass sale can upset a fellow, yet he stubbornly refuses to make it right. I actually gloated over it at the time."

Hamlin's fingers drummed softly on his desk.

"I've been deciding about the art journal project," as if the other matter had not been mentioned, "you still are keen for it—you realize that when you become a critic you must forego popularity?"

Jones dropped into a chair and began explaining his enthusiasm. An hour later, the store being closed, the watchman shuffling by, Hamlin said, "Then we will call it settled—my car is waiting, shall I wheel you up home?"

"A go it is, sir," Jones answered joyously, "I've a stack of articles as high as our stack of choice rugs —all waiting to be written. I don't need any vacation now."

"So I thought," Hamlin was leaving the room in his deft fashion. "How about riding up home—stay to dinner, if you like?"

The enthusiasm left Jones' voice. "I'm going the opposite way, sir."

"You don't seem overly joyous at the prospect," the blind man retorted.

Jones bought the imported cheese and went up to the flat, he was early so he could explain why he must not remain for the evening, an important bit of business furnished the excuse—that it was to be his art journal would mean little or nothing to Bertha.

He found her looking quite charming in her favorite red and black costume, her hair aglitter with rhinestone studded combs. To his excuses and explanations, Bertha burst into an abusive tirade. He made her appear the fool, these people would say

he was ashamed of her, unless he chose to stay and behave like a true pal. He was no better than she, if he would kindly remember, his grandfather was a laborer—hers was a farmer. She could have married well, if she had wanted to—he owed her a duty for taking her time and interest without proper reward.

Jones did not realize that Bertha's capacity for suffering could be appeased by a gift, whereas his distress was ended only when the wrong was righted. So another conflict entered his life. Hereafter, he must bear with Bertha, she felt he had wronged her, had not kept his bargain in the strict sense of the word. She was attached to him—he must not throw her aside.

During the unpleasant verbal turmoil, he was conscious of his desire to enjoy success without the presence of she who unselfishly brought it to pass or the handicap of such a one as Bertha.

But she did not prevail on him to remain. He promised to come soon and spend an evening, take her wherever she liked but for now, he must go, Bertha saw she had lost. The guests would soon arrive and she must not appear red-eyed. Poppy had stirred her suspicions, made Bertha fancy herself abused, Poppy flattering herself she could help Bertha "land him."

She adopted the hurt, distant mien until Jones disappeared and then burst into humming as she put the last touches to the supper table. She told herself the next thing to accomplish, since the presence of

friends did not make Jones realize the extent of his being involved, was to meet Mrs. Bynight. To know a man's mother—well, that put things on a different basis.

Coming home that same evening, Jones found Martha's detailed letter and a package from a New York art dealer who had instructions to ship anything out of the ordinary to Jones personally; after passing judgment on it, he either returned or placed the canvas in the sales gallery. Jones' test of an important picture was that of the oriental. He ate his meals, looking at it for a week or so. When another canvas took its place, he knew his estimate of the former subject in definite fashion. Martha never understood this habit. How could one tell if they liked a picture "when their mouths were full," she argued!

Unwrapping this last study, reluctant to supplant the present landscape under observation, a study in delicate, intricate cliffs, the arrival proved a portrait of someone called Justine—a girl with an odd, clever face, blue black hair dressed in a close Egyptian coiffure, triangular jade pins standing out like peacock feathers. Her black eyelashes were so long they cast a shadow over the pale face. She wore an exotic, exclamatory sort of gown and was surrounded by smart looking tea-things.

Jones enjoyed hanging the picture to his satisfaction. As he stood looking at it, new ideas for the magazine began to shape themselves. He felt as if Justine, whoever she was, would understand.

It would not take a week's probation to determine this portrait's worth. Jones felt an urge to buy it for his own collection. How calm she was, a little patrician grown careless of the fact. How quick would be her wit, how high her ideals. He wished she was not pouring tea, he could not see her eyes. He felt as if she were his assistant editor! He spent a restful evening, planning the first six numbers, glancing up at his aide-de-camp from time to time.

Not until he was ready for bed did he realize that, at this time, Bertha was saying her eternal, never ending goodbyes to her friends. He could imagine her cheap horseplay—he was thankful that he (and Justine) had been spared the agony.

It took no less than plumes gorgeous enough for a king's funeral coach to make peace with Bertha. Tears having failed, she was the aggrieved type of person who feels that other things matter in this cold, cold world besides mere money. Jones had hurt her feelings!

He was tolerant of this assertion—perhaps he had —he meant to! He also affected a new program —indifference. Even Martha's home coming, her amusing fussation at finding the apartment furniture moved in new positions and a bowl of mayonnaise going to utter damnation in the ice box, did not seriously annoy him. He was engrossed in the new art periodical which promised to create a stir when it made its initial bow—and Justine. He dreaded hearing his mother's comment on the portrait.

She looked at it for several moments without speaking. "It ought to be called Noblesse Oblige," she said, "she looks that way."

"How do you translate noblesse oblige," Jones tried to be serious.

"Doesn't it mean 'that's the way you're born?' This picture looks that way——"

"You mean she is a charming little gentlewoman, don't you?"

"Yes, and a snob—the sort that would have courage to do what everyone else steered clear of—I'd rather look at the last picture you had up, the one where birds' nests were sticking under rock ledges."

Jones felt personally offended. He changed the subject to that of his sister—how she actually bought CANNED creamed chicken and never wore any other than silk lingerie, her generosity in giving Martha enough finery to last a lifetime, the way Chicago as exploited by Pat caused her old head to whirl, Cornwall with its five hundred thousand population seemed a calm haven. She was glad to be home. Jones looked thin, had he had decent meals? Judging from the pantry she should say he had not—imagine such neglect and waste, oh, he had a dinner party! Why didn't he wait until she was home to do the work, she could have saved in so many ways. Next time, he must let her know ahead of the day.

She longed to ask as to Bertha but refrained, she realized as never before that Pat lived in another

world from her own, as remote as Marian's little kingdom. How fortunate that this son loved her to the exclusion of all else. To think he tried to spare her work by giving a dinner party in her absence, she knew only too well how the maid had slighted and cheated—she certainly hoped the people had had enough to eat!

In the early fall, when the art journal created favorable comment both in New York and London, and Bertha grumbled over Jones' increasing indifference, further success came to him by way of an unexpected event. Hannibal Hamlin died. To Jones was left controlling interest in the art store!

CHAPTER XXVI

Jones welcomed the addition of responsibility. It did not seem to lessen his good humor, his mother said. He sometimes asked himself whether this American good humor was not resultant of peasant ancestory when one's grandparents were, often as not, subdued Serfs?

With his art periodical creating its own enviable place in New York and abroad, the great store carrying on traditions as well as keeping pace with modern demands, Jones found that work alone compensated for unsatisfactory personal conditions—which fact he mentally confided to the portrait of Justine, still paramount in his affections. The original of the portrait would have understood well what he meant—although he reminded himself this Justine was very likely a composite study—a hired model used for the figure.

Something about his success amused him. It was so complete, virtuous, above suspicion was his inward complaint. Only in occasional drinking bouts or flirtations with married hostesses, the inharmonious often ugly life with Bertha gave opportunity for other sublimation. It was true one can easily

find actors to portray dope fiends, wizard detectives, abominable villains but it is hard to secure competent players to do the rôle of the good old man or the village curate. So Jones sometimes writhed under his steady, honorable veneer! His record was that of work, triumph—and hidden dreariness! The world continued to applaud his name, he was a club director to succeed Mr. Hamlin. Mrs. Hamlin expressed "confidence in his judgment," the executors of the estate, singularly enough, did not wrangle over this man's share in the ownership. He seemed to fulfill everyone's hopes but his own—repay his mother's efforts.

Yet life was a stale, somewhat vapid affair with denied ambition into prosaic channels. Jones could not stifle the desire for romance, no substitute of cheap emotion, homage, gratitude, even friendship could suffice.

Martha was showing signs of tyrannical defeat. When she gave up the effort to become what the portrait of Justine typified—a clever gentlewoman, she became an autocrat. Where once she regarded her son as one to be blindly obeyed, worshiped, she now took a somewhat unconscious attitude of authority. She was his mother—she would draw heavy dividends on those first years of effort in his behalf. She demanded to live in her own world into which no one must come unless they paid homage. Already, Jones had planned her rooms in the new house as Martha dictated. These rooms were to be her world. She would have satin bows on the cur-

tains and framed Bible verses and books of doggerel verse with be-glad ingredients. She would have rugs of her own choosing, not of her son's flawless taste, and her bed should boast of embroidered shams if she liked. It meant, in brief, that Mrs. Bynight's personality crystallized even as Jones' had done. He might reform the taste of the *nouveau riche* and supplement the excellent judgment of aristocrats but his mother's decisions, for the first time in years, were not to be set aside.

She could not catch up to Jones in the race about the social arena but she refused to stagger after him, only to be passed on every turn. This new state of mind was a relief to both. Jones felt that his mother was willing to rest on her laurels of the past, stop trying to win laurels of the present. At last, she was assured of her physical well-being. It had taken years to make certain no gray wolf would snarl at the door. Being poor was a deeply imbedded habit. Also, she saw that where once she had made things easy for Jones, she now made them difficult. It was a question of the older generation stopping protests and the young generation ceasing to defy, the result being excellent teamwork.

So Martha settled into being a gracious, limited, old-fashioned lady! She was in her element for she knew how to adopt the sentimental ways of her period. She became a "fast fading type" instead of a ridiculous, misunderstood individual. Jones never realized how clever his mother was when she figuratively retreated into "my room" and took to hand-

some caps and reading the Bible without fear of being laughed at—whereat her struggles to attain a stylish coiffure and "the larger life" met with scantily concealed amusement.

She became frailer of body yet more forceful of influence by this gallant surrender. People did not speak of her as "Poor Mrs. Bynight, she never had a chance, you know" but as "Mr. Bynight's sweet mother, snowyhaired, religious, all that—one could never contradict her. She lives in an adorable, embroidered world, suggesting lace mitts and parrots in cages. Drop in to see her—not many of her sort left, God bless them!"

Due to this maternal vamping, Jones renewed allegiance. His æsthetic sense was appealed to as well as the fear that Martha's days were numbered. Therefore, he must make each of them as red letter as possible. He wisely refused the suggestion to move the magazine office to New York. He was not interested in invading the metropolis but in making the metropolis acknowledge Cornwall as an art center.

He spent the winter abroad not only to buy but to meet artists, become imbued with the atmosphere of the other side. How little anyone suspected that his prolonged stay was due as much to Bertha as to any other element. Other members of the firm fancied Jones made the trip in such elaborate fashion because he was trying in a puritanical fashion to carry out every wish or intention Hamlin had ever voiced—and this European sojourn was one of them.

From the windows of her sheltered world, his mother considered it another marvelous feat of a marvelous son! She asked for lace patterns from Dublin and a Paisley shawl. Pat wrote a muchly underlined letter on pink paper smelling of shampoo powder in which she commissioned him to bring back every Parisian novelty he felt would give Michigan Boulevard a thrill.

Marian regarded the journey as a distinct personal asset, an opportunity for Jones from a cultural standpoint. Would he please find a certain bookstall in London and try to purchase a certain book of Greek comedies she wished to give Robert? Was he going to Rome? If so, Robert wanted to give him a card admitting him to the toplofty historians' dinner to take place within a few weeks—he must not miss being present, even if they requested him to sample butter found in a sealed jar at least a thousand years old! The news of his trip was already campus gossip—she was ever so proud of him, dear, wonderful Jones!

His friends called it "a good thing—he needed to get away," a splendid chap with big possibilities but he must be with the right sort. Rumors as to Bertha had cropped up at unpleasant intervals. Most regrettable was the way in which, with apparently no one to blame, Bertha had been introduced to Mrs. Bynight. Whether Bertha had known his mother was to be at the store selecting draperies was one of those questions not important enough to debate. Reflecting upon it afterwards, Jones realized his

mentioning the fact. And that Bertha, who rarely invaded his business domain, had made no comment.

However, as Martha was leaving the store, Bertha had loomed into view, whereupon followed a pause, a stilted introduction, a gushing on Bertha's part and an amusing innocence on Martha's.

But Bertha's point was won. She knew his mother! More and more, Poppy's propaganda was taking effect. Bertha must become so injured of heart, accepted by his mother that marriage was a logical outcome. Jones would either pity her to the point of consenting or be afraid to do otherwise.

Martha did not comment upon the introduction although she bore no ill-will to this woman who seemed harmless to all intents and purposes. She refused to analyze her son's attitude, she wished for surface harmony in keeping with her rôle of "dear old lady."

Bertha contrived to meet Mrs. Bynight again, she always sent her love via Jones and spoke of his mother in terms of extravagant praise. Before Jones sailed, she embroidered Martha a dressing gown which Jones found his mother both praised and wore.

"She is a clever needlewoman," Martha said, "fancy taking all this pains for me—I must write her a note."

"You needn't bother, I'll tell her," he was impatient at this impossible situation. Gradually, he was being made out a black-hearted rogue unless he stood by Bertha as he had stood by his sisters.

After sailing, Bertha's hysterical farewells and his family's commissions paramount, Jones realized that his one regret was leaving the portrait of Justine!

CHAPTER XXVII

Not ten minutes after his return, months later, he noticed the portrait was gone. His mother overreached authority in removing what she instinctively feared.

"I never liked your grand lady," she apologized, "so I hung up one of my own favorites—I knew you would not mind."

"Where is Justine?" he demanded.

"In the packing case—no harm has come to her," Martha wondered at the importance of this thing. To her mind it was more important that Bertha Mullen had called, at Poppy's instigation, proving a nice, reliable person who knew how to flatter. Her excuse had been that she wondered if Mrs. Bynight might not need someone to do her personal errands? Her second visit was because she was worried at not hearing from Jones—had his mother received word, goodness knows she would hear if anyone did. Sympathizing with her, Martha shared her son's last letter.

Martha could not dislike Bertha because she understood her so well. She saw defeat ahead just as there had been for herself—only Bertha could not retreat as gallantly as Martha had done. She

could hardly blame Bertha for clinging to Jones because of mingled affection and greed. She prayed over the situation and found several Bible passages which upheld her prayers—and then had Bertha show her a new stitch in embroidery!

If it gave the poor girl any comfort to visit her, it was little to do. No one else came to see her with the same interest. Besides, Bertha did things for her that meant comfort—rubbed an aching shoulder, cross-stitched a dress for Marian's little girl. Their mutual bond was that each understood the value of poverty—what it teaches and what it crushes. They had weathered similar economic stress, known people who accepted the ugliness of life as inevitable, been associated with the drab side of existence in such helpless intimacy that they emerged from it distorted in judgment, supersensitive, uninteresting to those who have never undergone the experience. This bond of understanding was removed from affection or approbation—it was merely that they met on common ground, an experience not unpleasing.

The morning following Jones' arrival, Justine's portrait was again before him. He had faithfully fulfilled all the commissions, even to the historians' dinner in Rome as well as a luncheon in honor of some oriental potentate where they served reed birds in little mausoleums of sweet potatoes! Yet the holiday had not changed his belief that the universe was more or less a thick ragout of ideas and himself one of the thickest!

Even his interest in the new house was a trifle

listless, although he expected to be moved by May. It seemed a lopsided affair filled with his lopsided personality—and "mother's rooms." He was amused at the way she struggled to remain passive while the furnishing of the lodge was under way, trying not to insist on plush draperies instead of brocade with Japanese rice ships sailing about a coral sea while an old blue and gold sky watched the procedure.

Martha had flashes of impatience at her inactivity. She almost envied Bertha her flat with its hideous equipment—the golden oak furniture, scrolled rugs, her card club supper parties, her clothes resembling the brilliantly beplumed inhabitants of some tropical isle. Martha revelled at being placed on an obscure pedestal—which was what being Jones' mother amounted to!

She indulged in more self pity than was wholesome—in her sheltered, valentine rooms. She wondered as to Bertha and Jones—had he been glad to see her? Was Bertha gracious or complaining? What had he brought her? What part would she play in his future? But she never knew. Jones spoke of Bertha with a certain careless respect, she spoke of her with praise and curiosity. After an attempt at discussing her, she felt it wiser to be content with her own reveries.

When Jones returned home he found that Poppy, recently made a widow through a car accident and now suing the company for damages, was living with Bertha and a new, formidible propaganda was afoot. It was no longer Bertha's bohemian flat—

it was Mrs. Fred Flynn and Miss Bertha Mullen who composed the household, sympathetic even to using the same face creams! It must be understood that Mrs. Flynn was Bertha's "chaperone" and champion and Jones nothing if not a villain should he lag in attention to "this poor girl who wasted her youth for his sake!"

Most men, as Jones reflected, would have abandoned such a situation with small concern. But the same fine ability which won him success and proved his greatest personal charm was incapable of such a proceeding.

He had brought Bertha handsome souvenirs, besides a necklace made from the backs of old Swiss watches for Poppy, now a person of formidable mien. She regarded this present as "junk," expecting something new and dazzling and her displeasure took the form of lecturing Jones while Bertha was out on an errand.

"Because you are Jones Bynight, a rich club man and art dealer, does not excuse you—no, siree, you ran after Bertha hard enough those first days. Poor Fred—he said it was a mistake! And she was so crazy for you, she hadn't common sense—now you've gotten on and you're tired and ashamed of her, she isn't pretty or in your set. She's got a heart complaint, the doctor says—poor girl, she's awful blue a lot of the time, I have hard work to stop her from getting desperate. A good thing that your mother was nice to her. The day she went to see her, Bertha was desperate. She says, 'Poppy, if

his mother ain't human to me, I'll end it all'—and you only sending her postcards! Oh, you had your fun over there and a lot you cared. Bertha could have married—but you were in the way, never declaring yourself one way or another—just a time waster, a drifter, now you're a rich snob that's come up from nowhere or nothing like a mushroom. By golly, men like you oughta be shot," Poppy had ended in a satisfactory flare of temper.

"My dear Mrs. Flynn," interrupted Jones, "I am delighted Bertha is in such excellent hands as yours, I'm sure she will never come to grief as long as you tell her what to say—or, kindly enough, say it for her."

Bertha had warned Poppy that "she'd get nowhere with him, no matter how she read the riot act"—and Poppy realized the truth of the warning. She felt dismissed, rather chagrined at having made a scene.

Jones mentioned the subject of Poppy's chaperonage as soon as he was alone with Bertha.

"I don't mind your temper," he said humorously, "but I object to Mrs. Flynn's wasting her dramatic ability on me—she must save it for the railway suit."

"Oh, did she start at you again?" Bertha said rather ashamedly, "I don't blame you for feeling sore—nor Fred for getting in the way of a live wire. She rags me a lot, too, but she means well. Oh, not that I expect you to care about either of us—you only care about yourself."

Jones did not answer, he felt numb and oldish whenever Bertha began these impossible tirades, always ending with a forced reconciliation and probably a gift.

"There's no love between us any more," she complained, sobbing.

"No, a sense of duty on my part and a sense of heaven knows what on yours. I don't dislike you, Bertha, but I never said I loved you and wanted to marry you. That was clearly understood—you were the one to endorse it, too. Isn't that so?" He longed for a magic carpet to transport himself heaven knows where! Any place away from this sniffling, pathetic creature who was gaining in avoirdupois what she was losing in disposition and who, contrary to sentimentalists, did not wax pale and spirituelle as unrequited love became her lot. She was more buxom than ever with a shrewish tongue and a greedy hand coupled with a certain lonely loyalty which made him feel honor bound! In truth, he had shut Bertha away from her own sort, in her light way she had become imbued with his "notions of living," yet she remained ineligible to his sort, too eligible for her own. So she clung to their frail tie with a hysterical woman's tenacity.

She considered Jones was to be shared with his mother—who was the cause of Bertha's entering his life. Bertha also felt she had gained in self-respect because of the alliance, she was proud of what he did, although she rarely knew any of the details and resented his superiority in odd moments of temper.

She appreciated his courtesy, though she estimated her financial gain with a fishwife's keenness for haggling. She wanted Jones to succeed—if he remained loyal to her. If not, she wanted to defeat his every effort. She must prove to her set she had not made a mistake in allying herself with Jones and to convince Jones' set that he had not sacrificed himself because of her inferiority. It was all impossible but she refused to admit it.

"You told me," she began, her face purpling.

"Please stop—what I told you and you told me has nothing to do with today's problems. You don't gauge the present by the past."

"You mean you are through with me," she began crying like a frightened child, "Oh, not that—I couldn't stand it after all this time——"

"As long as you wish, I'll hold to the promise I made," he said for the relief of ending the scene, "is that satisfactory? Now let me out of here—with that woman listening at keyholes. She cannot threaten me or your friends badger and reproach me or you weep yourself into my surrender. I do not intend to marry anyone—as I told you—but least of all would I ever marry you. You knew that long ago. If you have taken Poppy to live with you in order to impress and persuade me, you have done a useless thing. I know my own mind even better than Poppy does."

"You're cruel," Bertha mourned, laying her dark head on his arm, "I care awful hard—more all the time—no matter how you act—don't be

cross, I'm not meaning to be horrid—not like you think."

He looked at her with scorn for himself and pity for her. By all the rules of the game, he must be a cad. No matter what his success, he must be a cad! He regretted his realization of the fact.

He made a pretense of kissing her. "Let's don't be tense again," he pleaded, "small good ever comes of it . . . I'm afraid I'll not have time to see you for a few weeks. There's a tremendous drive of business and the contractors for the house are almost coming to the mat over various details. I'm wondering if your bereaved friend and yourself wouldn't like to do New York?"

Bertha's eyes sparkled through her tears. While in New York, she would write appealing letters to Jones—that was wiser than scenes. She was a trifle too old to cry appealingly.

While they were in New York, Jones, contrary to his report as to business pressure, decided to go a-visiting of his sisters and learn of their viewpoints in order to temporarily forget his own!

CHAPTER XXVIII

"No church or W. C. T. U. ever produced a metropolis," Pat informed her brother as she sat opposite him in the gay café, "I'm for a cabaret before a chamber of commerce—which is one reason my business flourishes. Wait until you see my clientele," beginning a vivacious account of the Ponce de Leonettes with whom she had to cope.

Jones was admiring her—a beautiful materialist, he decided, even the red-tipped saucy heels of her shoes suggested worldly scandals. Pat had proved that one could be a modernist and yet a human being. On the wreck of marriage she had built a worthy career. It happened to take the form of rejuvenating dowagers or making the merely married as distingué as any movie vampire—but it was a career.

True, her son was in the keeping of a hired nurse and she announced she intended to teach young Owen to spend money rather than save it, since it would be the surest way of having him want to earn it. Her relationships with her admirers were rather businesslike. Put estimated them as to personal worth and future possibilities, treating them accordingly. Sometime, she would re-marry. But not until her personality was so crystallized that she would be as enviable a wife as the man as excellent a

husband. Her naïve conceit permitted no underestimating of her achievements. Her sense of humor made her an excellent delineator of her environment and her son's development. After she proudly catalogued her activities, awaiting Jones' approval, she took note of her successful brother who, in times less secure, proved himself her Gibraltar.

She found Jones a stilted, unexpressed personality excepting where his work was concerned. He seemed unfamiliar with the joy which Pat demanded of life as much as she demanded customers to buy her waterproof rouges!

They taxied out to Pat's apartment on the North Shore with Pat still chattering everything from the social leader whose colored butler wrote successfully for the movies, using the doings of the household as his base, to the way she felt grown apart from her sister.

"Marian is so engrossed in faculty doings and whether or not to tell her children the Santa Claus myth—I'm sure she was offended when I sent her an equipped vanity case—" but all this time Pat continued to take note of Jones.

She said nothing of this until she exhausted herself as a topic of conversation—which took several days. Jones enjoyed his stay. Pat did not rush her friends to meet him although they longed to, as she hinted. She tactfully allowed him to re-arrange her apartment, which she had considered a thing of joy and beauty. Together, these astonishing two made a futurist kitchen by painting the walls a lemon

yellow with a desert caravan of camels and Arabs for a border.

"Wouldn't mother be petrified?" Pat said, "but it's the duckiest place to cook? Who wouldn't be willing to make Owen's porridge and sting eggs for three minutes while gazing at the Sahara? Can't you picture mother—shaking her head and saying, 'Seems to me an art gallery and a cook stove never went hand in hand?' She can't limber up past a certain point, can she? When I offered her cigarettes, it was pathetic. And when I confessed I was going out to dinner with someone owning large blocks of stock and as he had hitherto trained with tall brunettes, his attentions to me were doubly flattering—she was ready to call out the militia! I expurgated my entire existence after that rather than risk another scene. But what do you do?"

"I go to the club," was his brief reply; to have confided his personal affairs to this modern, sympathetic young sister would have trespassed on a delicate reserve which invested Jones with proper dignity in Pat's blue eyes.

Pat had also offered to re-pay part of his loan. But Jones told her to use the money for Owen's education—to see that he went through college as a gentleman—not a grind. True, the latter state of being was better than not to go at all but it warped a young thing, deprived them of normalcy. Later on they were apt to do puppy dog tricks with grown-up dog results!

Pat agreed. "You always were a little old man,"

she protested, "I remember you wearing dad's clothes that mother had re-made—yet you never complained. Periodically, you emptied your dime savings bank into her lap although you had planned on buying something for yourself. Marian and I never saved or slaved as you did. I was beautiful and brainless, Marian was clever and conceited and we proceeded on those lines with you doing the grubbing! Yet you're repaid," she added as if with a sudden qualm, "If I thought my young product would be half as successful, I couldn't find a hat ample enough to wear. Your firm is known everywhere—and your magazine is read by the most sacred of the socially élite. You get quite a kick out of life, don't you?"

"Exactly," Jones resolved never to disclose the staleness of his personal routine. How could Pat remedy it—not by breezy comment or violet ray treatments! He wished she had never mentioned the money. It pricked tender memories! He had been planning to marry on that first bonus, his joy at the prospect had been brave and daring, "like flying flags"—only to find Marian hopelessly in love and Patricia dancing toward dangerous borders!

"If Owen wants to marry young," was his parting advice, "it isn't as bad as some other things."

Pat shrugged her shoulders. "That is his affair—not mine. I'm trying to bring Owen up to stand on his own feet, mother tried to keep us under her wing until we were life size—it never does! I'd rather have my chick die of self-inflicted starvation than maternal suffocation, now wouldn't you?"

"If I had any chick," escaped from Jones.

"You'll be marrying some proper person one of these days," Pat babbled, "having us kowtow about you both. I'm glad you have had such an unhampered start—now you'll marry a different sort than you would have done in your salad days." She had not sensed the situation—Jones drew a sigh of relief.

He saw to it that the personal angle was not touched upon again. He took delight in making Pat's living room a quaint product—with old ivory furniture done in rose sprinkled chintz, dotted Swiss curtains at every window and a delightful scenic wallpaper to amuse his nephew's high geared, eight cylinder mind!

Yet he became bored with Pat's eternal gossip about the civilized jungle wherein her shop was located—alias the family hotel with its conflicting aura of baby prams, commuting husbands and bridge clubs. Here, according to Pat's lively tongue, lived the lie-abeds, the married martyrs and the pink-and-white toe brigade. He was conscious that Pat did not comprehend either his ability or his success—save in terms of money. In his absence she traded a great deal on her brother's reputation to further her own interests: "My brother, Jones Bynight—editor and founder of the *Art Journal*—almost sole owner of the wonderful firm of Hamlin and Son—" but she did not know all it signified. She had grasped when to be intelligently silent which carried her through otherwise revealing places. Yet Jones

was content with her mundane estimate. An anesthesia of indifference threatened him.

He traveled eastwards, through his own city, to reach Marian's home in the rocky hills of New England where he became submerged, without any warning, in the collegiate atmosphere.

He found the Varleys more satisfied than happy, intellectual snobs suffering from the "smell of the lamp." Having condoned, congratulated or condemned them as one saw fit, the fact remained they lived in a world quite their own with Marian still taking courses and her husband wearing shabby clothes that his library might remain otherwise. Physical existence was something to be endured, ignored as much as possible. Already, they planned their children's futures—the girl to be a physician, her name enrolled in a certain college entrance list, and the boy to be a mining engineer, his name likewise prematurely entered. That either child might have anything to say about their respective destinies was not considered a logical possibility.

Marian's lined forehead, her faded wedding finery or Robert's nearsightedness and the lack of a "real roast," as Pat used to say, ever entering the Varley oven did not trouble them. Their recompense was in other channels. Therefore, Jones decided it was none of his concern.

Although unsympathetic with their scheme of life, he refrained from criticism. He merely looked on, somewhat as his mother looked on at his life, the Varleys regarding him with pride, a pride suggesting

toadyism, he was inclined to believe. To them he represented that rare trinity of education—ability—success! When he waved aside their suggestion of repaying any loan, snarling inside because the matter came to notice, they were doubly eager in their efforts to please.

He preferred Pat's boy to Marian's children, impudent, chunky lad that he was, although he told himself the preference was due to having known Owen intimately. He did suggest a two inch beefsteak instead of eternal mush and milk and books, books, book; that the Varleys give their children a live toy or two, something to make them jump out and under. When Marian voiced disapproval over Pat's gift of the vanity case, he was terse in his unsympathetic reply.

Something struck terror to Jones in this atmosphere. What impressed him was how restricted were these men and women in the matter of personal development, how unfair was this condition, at least how disastrous in results on the feminine side of the ledger.

He saw again with mature eyes that type of blue stocking woman who, after forty finds herself more romantic than at eighteen. At eighteen she has been a hi-brow with deluded ideas of careers, her belief that life was consecreated to the muses. At forty, the repressed madness of youth, slowly asserted itself with pitiful but seldom understood innocence and added dangers due to the years of concentration rather than experience. The result was often a

bizarre, abnormal person suddenly wearing flapper effects, going round the world and then writing books telling how many men she met under strange circumstances "who were perfect gentlemen"—a starved satisfaction! Or becoming fanatical on the subject of banishing comic supplements and unethical fairy tales or preventing the vivisection of white rats, writing free verse and reading it aloud while bored audiences chortled politely.

He met several of these souls who saw in him the always possible hope, women who now spent half a year's savings for an evening gown—but of no avail. The cheapest organdie adorning youth with its fresh white skin and innocent eyes with invitations in their depths, pink lips capable of no classic phrases but making furious, adorable protests at being kissed—such as these won the victories. Of what use were family cameos or old laces, exaggerated reports of vacation trips with pathetic fibs about birthdays, references to past chances to have married, a brave, overly educated attempt at flirtations.

Jones protested the system of education which precluded from its followers such things as Pat took as her birthright. He, too, knew loneliness but with a masculine lack of conventional restraint. It had been worth the sacrifice to have saved Marian from becoming a cultured, bleak soul who longed to know life in unblushing terms.

He mentioned something of this to the Varleys but they were politely disinterested. Their marriage

had been satisfactory—they could hardly term it as a heaven-inspired event since they believed in atomic force and not a deity. Romance having expended itself, their interests turned with mutual consent into things intellectual. Their children were minds to be shaped as they dictated, not tender individuals from whom they might learn revealing, sometimes unflattering truths.

After a fortnight of being exhibited on the campus, "fed on animal crackers" as Jones protested, he was keen to return home, dig into work and see Bertha. Even her greedy scheme of existence was indicative of red corpuscles!

When an absent-minded professor whose matted hair resembled a Scotch terrier and who wore white puffed satin ties at all hours of the day, insisted on giving a farewell tea with everyone sitting in state while one of those starved souls exhibited porcelain thumb rings as she read aloud her Chinese sonnets, Jones decided never again to expose himself to a recurrence of the affair.

Coming away with whimsical relief, he told himself he was too unfair in his estimates. He, son of a day laborer, had within himself the discriminating possibilities of a Puck and a Voltaire!

He found an infantile relief in his mother's old-fashioned self, in somewhat the same way Bertha's comradeship proved a coarse substitute for dreams.

Now Martha decided to be a story book old lady, although her heart and brain felt younger than when she was thirty-five, torn between an effort to pay

the butcher's bill and read her Shakespeare—Jones basked in the quaint atmosphere with which she was surrounded. She was mother, an impersonal semi-deity, no longer the struggling, often hurt or angered and usually awkward person who did not perceive that cruelly drawn line of demarcation between the cultured and the longing-to-be-cultured.

This fact impressed him more keenly than before. It was a relief to find her gentle self agreeing with everything he expressed. His enemies became her enemies, his friends hers without reservation, the mental barrier formed by "mother's adorable Albert Memorial viewpoint" preventing intrusion into his actual life.

Martha was overcoming any sense of exile, physical toll for the years of effort helped in this decision. Besides, she realized her son preferred the story book mother. She was less essential in many ways but something to be cherished—like his choicest jades which were in velvet lined cases and the cases in a carved cabinet of rare wood, opened only on special occasions.

CHAPTER XXIX

JONES had been decent in building his wood lodge not to interrupt the trees which had been growing for over a century. His mother's sitting and bedrooms were placed to overlook the most stately of these with a balcony where she might enjoy a summer day siesta or spread crumbs for her beloved snowbirds.

The effect as one drove up the lodge drive was an ambush of green with a glint of diamond shaped windowpanes and flaming red brick chimneys. Within, Jones let his pocketbook and taste run riot, purchasing nothing, as he shamedly admitted, that Justine of the portrait would not have approved. It seemed such a natural thing to pretend conference with this young gentlewoman—say as to painting the living room woodwork amethyst and having fussy, lovely, crystal lamps installed therein—he could picture her nod of approval when the drawing room became a symphony of green and buff with a Savonnerie carpet and the lift panels in the hall, the lift being for Martha's benefit, were painted with gay balloons, parachutes and a passenger aeroplane.

He debated with Justine before he let milk colored candlesticks and a blue bristol glass lamp be

dominant in the reception hall and when he succeeded in getting woodwork from an old London house to be reassembled for his library, he decided that in this room Justine's picture must be hung.

He fancied she would prefer the dining room, however, in Italian style, the furniture painted every color from old ivory to daring scarlet, green that had wedded blue, intense purples with soft draperies and a bust of Caroline of Naples to lend a gentle air.

His mother mildly objected to this room—mostly to the number of crystal bowls and the sketches of Venetian waterways which seemed "streaks of blue and blood red" but Jones knew Justine would have approved, that she would have "enjoyed" the two-top table, one top frankly decorative, a mounted guinea fowl calling attention to the fact, and the other for cigarettes and ash trays.

How Justine helped in imagination to plan his moonlight garden, to be masses of white phlox and carnations, peonies and roses with a fountain epitomizing the spirit of fantasy. There seemed no corner of the lodge which was to win him the title of "that phenomenal but hopeless bachelor" but what Justine would not have applauded—and shared!

Periodically, Jones called himself a fool for such reveries. Another man might have turned to the stock market or the art of becoming a miser, raising blooded cattle, backing a chorus girl in some risqué farce and enjoying the consequent sardonic importance. Instead, Jones built a house of dreams.

The only practical idea regarding it, his architects had gossiped, was his admission that had said house been in Nantucket it might have made an admirable series of tea rooms.

It was his mother who saw the kitchen garden was planted correctly and mildly suggested that the laundry chutes although painted cleverly with rainbow hues were so located as to connect with the laundry and not the coal bins.

When Jones bought her a sedan, purple enamelled of body like a candy box, and insisted she be driven out, done up in properly luxurious wraps, she felt as if she were in a luxurious but none the less restricted prison.

Her old friends would be timid of calling at the lodge. Jones' friends would flock in for week-ends, he was certain to be a popular host. And Martha would remain in her dainty rooms, sort of an "Exhibit A" no more, no less. The guests would, first of all, run up to say "hullo to dear Mrs. Bynight, a lamb thing—you can see by her hands how hard she has worked—she seldom goes out—it wouldn't do. She is perfectly happy in Jones' success, well she might be, too, for he worships her as if she were sacred!" Which would begin and end her part in the entertaining. Her Bible, old-time sugary tales, her fancy work, her music box, her pretty clothes, her meals served on immaculate, flower-trimmed trays, drives in the lavendar cab—calls from financially embarrassed persons—these comprised her life. Jones would have been amazed had

he known how often she thought of Bertha. Bertha was still in the thick of things.

Returning from his trip, he found Bertha had visited his mother more often than was pleasing. His was the position of not wanting the pot to call the kettle even a delicate gray—and in consequence becoming very much smudged. He wanted his mother to regard Bertha as someone whom he had known as a younger man in a care-free way and whom he had outgrown, yet still felt kindly towards —just as his mother sent gifts to the old neighbors. He wanted Bertha to feel that his mother was such a charming frailty, she must have no idea Bertha's friendship with himself was other than a pleasant affair. He did not want Bertha to whine about wasted youth or hint of matrimonial opportunities gone astray. As for his own reaction—if his mother spoke only good of Bertha who insisted that she adored the former—and both were sidetracked from his own busy life, what could he do about it? Bertha was merely part of the pattern which had combined to make him an extravagant dreamer, yet intent on business and not altogether beyond reproach in personal relationships. As long as Bertha recognized her own exile, he was satisfied. She must realize her scenes and Poppy's influence were without avail. True, he owed Bertha a certain loyalty nor did he in the least dislike her. But he realized that during these years her viewpoint had so narrowed that he was the gigantic figure in it and she now demanded unfair consideration. He had made

her discontented with the things she once had and had not given her the things which she realized she would be awkward in possessing. The upshot of it was that she considered she had a right in ordering his destiny and in his mother she had found a willing ally. These two, so widely different yet united, were firm in their opposition against such a one as the original of Justine's portrait coming into Jones' horizon.

Bertha's fresh beauty had gone, the day of becoming the virago gypsy was close at hand. When she found harsh threats and clumsy scenes only bored him, she chose a new rôle—that of a lonely woman who would care at no matter what personal loss.

There were still surprising moments, as Jones often reflected, when he enjoyed Bertha's boisterous cheer—and excellent cooking. He disapproved of his own enjoyment but it did not alter the fact. There was a let-down of tension, in contrast to his usual life. It was as removed as when he sat in his mother's rooms and indulged in memories.

Bertha had grown fonder of money than Jones suspected. She wanted to be assured of security in her old age. She saw that Jones cared little about money, he demanded peace of mind—and she acted accordingly. Poppy no longer dominated her. Having lost the suit against the railway company, she returned to work in a department store, dependent on Bertha for all the "treats" which her weekly stipend could not have provided.

Several months after Jones' wood lodge was fin-

ished, his mother resigned to the slant-eyed orientals who took charge of its housekeeping even to openly smoking her son's cigars and letting good cream sour in plain view, she came near having a most unpleasant half hour.

Jones had returned from New York, a fleet of new ideas engrossing him. He had run in to say hullo to his mother before dressing for a dinner-party in town. He was in anything but a receptive mood for small talk.

"Hullo, darling," he announced himself, coming in to toss a liseuse of thinnest white into her lap. "Wear that and be my nice wraith. I'm tired—so many people I knew happened to be on the train—talked our heads off—how is everything? Don't tell me Kato is still absorbing my champagne or the minister had persuaded you to forego buttered toast because the heathen of Kickaboo have no tooth brushes—" he was impatient to be off.

"It's a sight for sore eyes to see you," his mother began, "been as lonesome as a graveyard here if it hadn't been for old Mrs. Slattery and Bertha. I appreciate Mrs. Slattery's coming clear out here—just to think, she walked from the street car, a good half mile—and poor soul, she told me her son got married out in Kansas and that means her monthly stipend ends! Dear me, how she worked sewing flour sacks so as to get that boy an education—Jim Slattery never would have amounted to a hill of beans if it hadn't been for his mother. Seems hard, don't it? I'd like to make the money up to her but

she's got a wicked pride. I didn't dare do anything more than send her home in the machine. My stars, she thinks this house is grand—who wouldn't, at that? And Bertha has been so nice—she does all my errands like no one else could. And, I hope you won't mind, she went right into the kitchen and made me an old-fashioned dish or so—this Japanese cooking tastes like it was boiled in one pan, I just itch to toss up some biscuits. Bertha overruled them in short order—she's a fine girl, she don't look well, either."

Jones' silence told of his displeasure.

"I take the blame," Martha added, "Bertha's not to be scolded. She's kind hearted—and she just worships you. Why, she said——"

"Please," Jones held up a protesting hand. "I wish you wouldn't discuss me with—callers. It is bad enough to show your friends my new clothes. Bertha's a good sort—but why this intimacy?"

"Haven't you been friends for years——"

"A friendship begun in salad days—neither of us would do the same if we could re-order the past. I can't analyze why I became friends—it was one of the things which just happens. If Bertha has neglected everyone else for me—when she knew I never thought of her seriously—it is not my fault. I appreciate her kindness to you—but I'd rather you talked of anything else but myself."

"We said the nicest things," his mother protested, "sometimes I am lonesome to talk to somebody who isn't an affected snob, tolerating me because I'm your

mother," her face flushed with resentment. "After all, there's not such a heap of difference between Bertha and me and me and the world—I sometimes wonder what all the rumpus over this being an aristocrat is about! You didn't rest until you'd thrown away everything I had gradually gotten together, some of the things were shabby and cheap —yet those same things were like the hand-me-downs from your old Chinese mandarins, second-hand stuff. Their things were thousands of years old, maybe, mine only a few years—but it was all somebody's trash. Ever think of it? I did. I've wished for my rocker lots of times, the one your Aunt Min sent from the country—you did it over for me, remember? The girls bought the covering at a sale. That chair meant a lot to me—just the memories. And when you have a cracked vase worth a thousand dollars that some Chinese nobleman had in his house—it don't mean anything alongside the rocking chair my youngsters made presentable."

Jones consulted his watch. He saw he was in for it. "I'd probably have better sense now—at the time we moved into the apartment, I was an extremist. So tired of makeshifts, penny poverties there was no reasoning with me. I'm sorry, mother—but I must go."

Martha was in tears. "I wish I hadn't spit out what I thought," oblivious of his wincing at her homely phrase, "I shouldn't have—when you are so generous—only, Bertha was awfully kind——"

"You are quite right—I'm sorry I'm such a dunce. But I'll have to disappear for now——"

"One more thing," she insisted, "I want you to understand about Bertha. I'm not urging you to like Bertha—only don't hurt her feelings because she's too fond of you. People can like people even if they are thinking very differently about most everything. Ideas haven't an awful lot to do with hearts, my boy."

Jones made another attempt at apologizing and then fled. He did not know that the thing his mother intended telling was that Mrs. Slattery of the old neighborhood on Elm street had mentioned a Jo Willard who married a niece of her second cousin's —"had to marry her"—and the said Mrs. Willard was always a troublemaker and shirker of family care and was about to get a divorce, seeing as she had been left some money by her folks and was afraid Jo might benefit by it. Willard had made a modest go of a butcher shop in Detroit. He was agreeable to the divorce and their children were nearly grown. Also, in confidence, Bertha the very next day had told her that Jones had been very different from her first beau—Jo Willard, who up and married a Cora Whitney without a word of warning and who, the last that was heard, lived in Detroit and had forsaken the rôle of millinery drummer to keep a butcher shop.

Was it not a small world, after all, was the sulphitic comment his mother had wished to make!

Martha, instead, reproached herself for what she had ventured to say—would she never learn to keep within her limitations? If Bertha was wise, she would do the same.

CHAPTER XXX

In the late fall of 1920, Jones met the original of his portrait. It seemed a natural sort of happening and to have decided how much was romantic fate and how much unfortunate coincidence would be like trying to weigh out the gold in sunshine.

Someone told him a young artist was waiting to ask about exhibiting still life canvases in the galleries, eager to sign the contract that entitled Jones to an option on all her work. Which news was not overly cheering in the day's detail and the prospect of an enforced evening spent with Bertha, neglected now for several days.

But because he never allowed anyone other than himself to accept or reject work, Jones went into the anteroom, only to stand back as if Justine were the Chinese decorations in oil that she wished to sell and he an enthusiastic purchaser.

She made a quaint picture in her old-fashioned mink dolman, a bright Russian peeked hat and a beaded purse in the form of a flower. There was no difference since the portrait had been done, the same odd, clever face with its frame of blue black hair. Only now he could see that her eyes were long, gray things brimming with pertinent questions.

"I beg pardon," she said presently, recalling the

fact that she was not a portrait. "Am I speaking to Mr. Bynight?"

"And an extremely old friend," holding out his hand. "Can you guess why?"

She did not offer to take it. "I presume you mean because of the house—your grandfather and mine?" one could hardly call her tone insolent. It had a certain hauteur combined with amusement, as if she considered this sudden declaration in poor taste.

"What house? Sit here—put your things there—I'll get to them presently," he placed a chair, turning on some over lights.

"The Dunlevy house," she spoke impatiently, "I am Justine Dunlevy, my grandfather built that hideous barn, it's a club now, isn't it? And people say your grandfather——"

Jones was annoyed at his flushing. "My grandfather helped to lay the floors," he finished quickly, "so you thought that was our mutual bond! I didn't realize that people still peddled the story about. But you are wrong. I have known you for years because of your portrait, you could hardly have been twenty then, it is the one where you are pouring tea, do you recall it?"

"Fitzhugh's daub," she laughed, enthusiasm creeping into her voice. "Of course I recall it—that was done in London by a friend of father's, an amazing rogue who never came to any good end—but everyone liked him anyway. He taught me everything I knew. I posed for him in return—I sat for every-

thing from the haughty hostess in that canvas to the double rôle of Princess in the Tower! If Fitzhugh had had enough to drink, he could make out with me as the model. Tom thought the thing you speak of was rather good—he prevailed on Fitzhugh to give it to us and then he sold it to a dealer to pay bread-and-butter bills. That was Tom. Tom is my father, you see. After that he decided we must move on—there was to be a fortune for him in Tangiers—so we moved on and I lost track of Fitzhugh—and you have the canvas?"

"My treasured possession," unconscious of the bromidic phrase, "I used to change my pictures about—but never yours. It is hung where I can always look at it. That is why I felt you were an old friend, not the other."

Justine laughed to cover her confusion. "A thousand pardons, I only wish my grandfather had been the one to lay the floors of your grandfather's house! The former is the wisest sort of American ancestor to indulge in! For here we are—you owner of this splendid store, dominating a share of America's art activities and I, in shabby clothes and a delicatessen store background, asking you to buy—those," pointing at the still life studies.

Jones was silent.

A somewhat wistful smile on her lips, Justine finished, "I'm afraid you thought I was trying to impress you with being a Dunlevy! Banish the notion. I'm hampered by the fact—but I mustn't waste your time," recalling the errand.

"I insist on monopolizing your time," he corrected, "remember, I have known you a long time —a good many years. You cannot consider yourself a stranger because you happen to appear in the flesh with some colorful canvases," waving his hand in their direction.

"What have you thought of me all these years— fancy poor Fitz's daub holding sway in your home!" When she laughed, Justine's personality seemed pungent, like a garden after a sudden, refreshing shower.

"You want to know?" Jones readjusted his thickish nose glasses, pulling up a chair beside her, "I thought at the outset that you were both insolent and mysterious, somewhat to be feared. Then that you were wonderfully heartless, insincere—yet I decided never to part with the portrait, it was to be my special delight, confident, it suggested youth, romance. Tuscany in April—despite the tea set of catlike comfort! Can you tell me why? I've waited a long time to know. There were other times I was positive you could either be a doormat person enduring eternal trampling upon or else turn into a veritable sword of Damocles, having given no hint that the transformation had taken place—a dangerous and adorable creature to have about—that is partly what I thought!"

"You think you can use my stuff?" she rose as if to end the estimate.

Jones was unperturbed. "Awfully rude to interrupt," he announced as she went over to re-arrange her pictures, "come, I don't believe you would give

me credit for my discernment. I'll tell some more—I decided you possessed another interesting trait—you were unlike women who looked their best when wearing new clothes but, most unheroine like, you should wear things which you had made subservient to your personality, off effects—say a skirt that sagged or a bow tied on the side it was never meant to tie on—you were a super-girl because clothes never made you!"

"It is well that donner et pardonner is our motto," she said lightly.

"Isn't it? And that we've the floors of the Dunlevy mansion as a common bond—my grandfather laying them, yours walking over them. I am trying to place in which Dunlevy group you belong—there are the Barton Dunlevys—but there were only sons—and the Hamilton Flood Dunlevys are bankrupt—and the——"

"No one remembers me," Justine said with sudden bitterness, "that is something to be glad about! But tell me—what of these——"

"Since you're determined to clear away business before you admit to friendship—" Jones obediently began examining her work.

They were studies of smoothly carved ivory gods, brittle, glossy vases of blue and green with backgrounds of daring Chinese embroideries painted with a talented but careless hand. Also two night scenes with cold, tragic moons and splashes of violent light escaping the edges of faintly defined house shutters.

"Either a riot of color or sombre as the tombs,"

Jones mused, "I should say you have the ability but not genius—still, the world is seldom troubled with the latter and our firm is noted for having 'good buys' and 'satisfactory things'—you understand. I wanted to paint once—be a sculptor to be exact. I think I had about as much talent as you display. It was impossible, fortunately, for me to develop it. Who taught you? You've had some splendid grounding."

"Mostly Fitz—he used to say I knew how to paint but I must flatter myself into believing that fact," she admitted, shrugging her shoulders, "I had foolish lessons at convent schools but Tom never kept me any one place long enough to have it count."

"Tom—Tom Dunlevy?"

"My father, another tent dweller who plays the game with loaded dice," she said quickly, "one of those magnetic, futile persons and a tarnished aristocrat to boot. Please don't ask any more."

"Why not?" Jones displayed rude persistence, "do you think you can leave here, never know me other than the man who did or did not accept your pictures when for years I've thought of you and talked of you and——"

"Why should I know you?" was her instant question.

"You do know me—you don't imagine I've consulted your picture about every detail of furnishing my house even to achieving an artistic yet old-fashioned effect in my mother's apartments, whether to buy a shaggy jowled airedale or a trim terrier—to

say nothing of debating the various creeds men have invented and whether or not we are a chance race on an uncertain, dying planet, oh, these things are merely the fringe of our understanding. I was positive you were human enough to like military bands and fried scallops and despise fruit salad and morning musicals—after all this, to say nothing of moving you in to be the inspiration of my study and installing a carved fire screen depicting the hunt, with dazzling white rugs spread under your presence—and you, merely-in-the-flesh, dare to turn up an artistic little nose and say, 'Why should I know you?'——"

"It is closing time, sir," lisped a clerk, having been instructed to thus rescue Mr. Bynight from tenacious callers.

"Go ahead and close," ordered Mr. Bynight to the clerk's amazement.

"What have you to say for yourself?" he demanded as the clerk disappeared.

She was smiling, the gray eyes tender and friendly. "I'll answer questions," she said softly, "if you are quite sure—as to what you have just said."

"I'm quite sure," he told her seriously.

"Wait, I must explain some things. Please know, oh, friend of many years and questions, I am a much traveled, sophisticated person, as the daughter of Tom Dunlevy, black sheep, ought to be. Mother died when I was four—and since then I've been used to going to schools and being packed up

and sent away because no one paid my bills—you can fancy the treatment I received during those times. I think my best realization of what a mother meant was when I saw an idiot epileptic taken to an institution, his mother having died. I heard the neighborhood chatter of how hard it would be for the poor thing, how different from a mother's care. I grieved for that epileptic, realized what his loneliness would be, pictured his distress. Then I understood that all children without mothers suffered in more or less the same fashion. I'd been trained to help Tom off to bed if he was drunk, telling collectors no one was home when he was hidden in a closet, hearing cheap, evil things from the careless lips of his companions—and always listening to his contemptible wails about his family's social landslide, their hard-heartedness as to his shortcomings, how he was turned adrift, how I was not old enough to marry off to someone who would pay his bills! He brought me up without faith or love, both were represented to me as handicaps."

"You see, we have much in common," she rose and faced him in a boyish sort of frankness. "While your family were cautiously climbing, mine were losing, more each day. Tom treated me with the camaraderie of a boon companion with neither illusions nor protection. I was welcome only when I proved useful. When I rebelled, we fought—sometimes one, sometimes the other won."

"He is quite impossible—and I love him. I blame him, as youth always blames those who trained them.

I've cut loose. He's gone to South America on the wild chance of making a fortune in rubber—I'm going to struggle with my brush. I came home—as nearly home as there is for me. I could grovel among old friends and win some God-forsaken, educated job, be a retainer of the rich by the bounty of family connections but I won't. I'll make my own place or join Tom in earnest, for all time," she waited his verdict. He was realizing that she was a lovely, embittered woman, as sensitive as violin strings, destined for authority, intense in the desire to lead her own life.

He laid his hand on her shoulder. "May I take you home?" he asked, sighing as he recalled with whom the evening was to be spent, "I shall be engaged this evening but tomorrow, Miss Dunlevy, you will lunch with me and we can talk further."

He fancied tears started in her eyes but the long, black lashes prevented their detection.

"You would better not," she urged, "it will spoil everything!"

"I've the right to tell you of myself," was his argument, "you just promised to answer questions. I want the chance to be as honest as you have been. Regarding the pictures, I'll treat you as any unknown but promising exhibitor—you can see Halliday about our contract. I'm interested in you—I only called you Miss Dunlevy as a joke. You are Justine to me—always."

The watchman and the scrubwomen were engaging in twilight gossip. Justine rose, gathering her

old dolman together, he noted that her gloves were skilfully mended.

"I live at 45 Goodrich street," she admitted, "are you shocked at the address? A wonderful place to live, I don't need to leave the house for models. Everyone is kind. If one has a pot of soup—we all have a taste. If someone has a grievance, we sit in judgment. If we can't pay rent—there's a pawnshop a square off. If we do pay rent, we have clean towels—sometimes a fire." She was leading the way out of the store, talking in her breathless, pleasant manner.

Hers was the charm of personality which made newsboys call her "lady" and men lift their hats when she entered an elevator. She stepped into Jones' roadster with an air of pleasing authority, commenting on his display of tapestries.

Before they reached the lodging house, she added lightly, "You must know the worst—I was proprietress of the Pink Pitcher in Greenwich Village last year—until said pitcher was smashed by Tom's debts!"

"I refuse to be discouraged," Jones opened the door. "Please wait for me in the gallery—I'll have Halliday ready to see you at twelve."

"I'd sell my soul for fame," she said in sudden protest against her present conditions.

"Don't waste your resources, Halliday has never betrayed the slightest symptom of a Faust," was his retort, enjoying her confusion.

CHAPTER XXXI

It was easy to listen to Bertha's monotonous talk. He knew Justine! He was absorbed in noting how unlike Bertha was to her—yet Justine was living with just such a background as Bertha had once had but Justine achieved cynical superiority to the environment. She saw both humor and pathos in the humdrum details, as in the song title, "Alaska, the City by the Sea," written by a fellow roomer. Whereas Bertha would have disapproved of anyone's wasting time in pushing a pen when he might shovel snow.

Responding to Jones' mood, Bertha encroached on his good-nature to tell of Poppy's need for new glasses, poor Poppy with only her little stipend, she could never hold a good job if her eyes were bad and goodness knows, what it came to fees, oculists used the same method as Jesse James only Jesse had a horse.

Jones promised to help in the matter and after more idle bantering, he started to leave. The evening had been easier than he had expected.

"Sometimes I worry," Bertha said wistfully, following him into the hall, "I think you'd like to break away and all—I used to mean a lot to you, didn't I?

You mean a lot to me," one strong, red hand on his sleeve.

Her common face with its dismal expression blurred the mental picture of Justine. He shuddered, figuratively, warning himself that this matter of putting aside one who has served a purpose is not to be lightly done.

"You're always nice," he heard himself saying, wondering at the lie. "We understand each other too well not to be friends—tell Poppy to go to Dr. Loew—I'll have phoned him—he's a friend of mine. Don't stay out here, it is cold."

Reluctantly, Bertha let him pass. Poppy crept out of the bedroom as soon as Bertha returned.

"Well?" she asked sharply, unlovely in her careless negligee.

"Dr. Loew," Bertha said softly, "he'll phone him . . . oh, God, you make me sick sometimes, all you care about is getting something for nothing—" she put her head on the table and gave way to loud sobs.

"Tarts and tadpoles," commented Poppy, "what is wrong with me? I never noticed little Bertha passing up chances."

Bertha lifted a teary face, "Didn't you ever come to like anybody so much you hated to have to be grateful to 'em?" she demanded, "no matter how you once felt—don't you know what it is to be just a fool-woman!"

This was too technical for Poppy. She left the room.

Justine sent a note postponing her engagement with Mr. Halliday and her luncheon with Jones. Detained by unexpected business, she would come to the store the following day.

During which interim Jones chaffed because of the delay and that most astonishing of things occurred which unromantic Halliday attributed to beginner's luck.

A patron of the sales gallery not only admired one of Justine's decorations in oil, temporarily placed in a poor light, but he bought the same, paying the hundred dollar price without quibbling.

Whereas Jones felt the same exhilaration which had been his during certain stepping stones in his career. He knew all too well what a hundred dollars would mean to Justine, he puzzled over how to avoid her paying the expected commission.

As he waited for her in his office, where she was to come as soon as she had talked with Halliday, he told himself he had never before waited as eagerly for anyone! She was a trifle late and when he turned to congratulate and scold her all in one, he felt abashed, put in his place by this haughty young person in her shabby dolman, her gown of dull blue with golden scrolls emphasizing the fact that although it was made-over it had originally been a French creation.

"Why did you do it, how could you be so cheap?" she demanded, waiving formalities.

"Do what?" He almost called her by her given name, "are you too prosperous and important to

think of such a thing as a luncheon card? Congratulations—may this be but the first of many sales."

"How dared you?" she almost stamped her foot, "and I liked you, too!"

"Do what?" he felt aggrieved, as misunderstood as any woman.

"I wouldn't have thought you so clumsy," she continued, her haughtiness evaporating under Jones' distress, "you meant well—but that sort of thing will never do. Father would have fallen on your neck—but I am not father. I'd rather have to color Christmas cards or mend fine laces for hand launderies than——"

"You silly Justine," he said boldly, "you think I forced the sale of your little canvas! I never looked at them after you left—Halliday dumped them about as he chose to do. I never even saw the purchaser—but I shall extract our commission from your check! There's revenge. You don't imagine I'm guilty of that tuppenny sort of philanthropy?" Jones knew how to adopt a dignified, injured manner which disarmed her.

"Could it have been a bonafide sale—truly—oh, *truly?*"

"Must have been," shrugging his shoulders, "I assure you Halliday never pushed your stuff when others have things hanging in here for months. The man happened to want it—probably had a smoking room or a poodle dogs' lounge that needed just suct a dash of color. The next person would turn

a cold shoulder on your wares and enthuse over a futurist conception of Noise! Don't fancy I'm such a poor business man that I'm rushing your things willy nilly. The only picture I'm interested in is the one of yourself—now, I'm ready for your apology," folding his arms in a mock threatening manner.

"I'm forced to believe you," she said briefly, "it's been one of those damnable bits of luck that inspire false hopes! At any rate, I signed Mr. Halliday's contract."

"Why couldn't you come yesterday?" changing the subject with abruptness.

"Why should it matter? I sold a canvas by staying away. And now, I'll go along and not stop for lunch——"

"You think not? I think you will. I've eaten so many meals with you in spirit—when you hung in my dining room—gazing at you instead of ravaging the finest avacado the January market afforded, that you can't escape me! Please don't waste time arguing, like women haggling over cab fares. Let's go to the University Club where it is quiet. Do you mind walking a few blocks?" he had thrown on his wraps. A moment later they were leaving the building.

Justine was more amazed at herself than at Jones. "I am a silly," she admitted as she neared the club, "I flew into a bolshevist rage, pictured you as cheap, lording it over a fallen Dunlevy—I had some of the hatefullest things to say—and now I'm ashamed and more than that—hungry!"

"Good work," Jones took her arm, "how will you spend the check?"

"It is spent; yesterday I was scurrying about from pawnshop to pawnshop to raise money for Tom. He's in another jam in Buenos Aires—or says he is —and I can't let him go adrift. I have some hideous things that I use in emergencies—so it was no deprivation personally. But now I'll get them out and be ready for the next onslaught."

Jones made no answer until they were seated, Justine enjoying her luncheon. He had a guilty feeling, he remembered he had taken Bertha to a cheap French restaurant—they pledged their friendship at the same if he remembered correctly. He disliked being here with Justine, even if the calibre was vastly superior. He wanted to forget everything but Justine—no tag ends of the past to annoy him.

"That is too bad," he said finally, "I mean about your father—not the entree. But you will sell more things and, once established, you can pass pawnbrokers by with a cold stare. I think I understand."

"It is poor taste to understand people," she objected, tilting her proud head, "I try never to understand people I like—I don't want to be disappointed or cause them embarrassment. For instance, there is an aged, ex-book clerk at the rooming house, an old dear he is—Edward Preach. He left his good position because he hoped to write. You see, he had spent so many years selling the world's worst literature to the world's best people and being left in company with the masters, that he fancied he

could rival their works. So he tried. Now he is reading gas meters—one must live. But I never let him think I understand. He believes me envious of his interesting employment—poking into dim, mysterious cellars while impatient maids let him in and out or stand guard over the wine closet, thus discovering how many feet of gas the Simkinses of Argyle Terrace have ruthlessly consumed! He has an air of superior aloofness when one induces him to speak of his vocation—" she was crumbling bread between slim, restless fingers.

"I will never understand again," Jones said humbly. "I'll just like you if I may."

"Do," an impulsive smile giving her face a childish fascination. "I want to be liked but not analyzed—not while I wear old furs and have my precious—my pearl things at Rothschild's."

"You're a decided young person," trespassing further, "generous and splendid but determined to mould others' destinies and have a mental sign of 'hands off' on your own shoulders. I'll try to respect it. But only until your furs are glossy sables and you wear your precious pearl things every day. Then I shall understand you!"

"Since you wear black pearl scarf pins, may I understand you?" was the ready challenge.

"Do—I've waited years for someone to accomplish the feat."

"No one bothered—it was too easy," her eyes growing into soft, twilight things, "however—I'll try," leaning her patched elbows on the table.

"First, you have been thoroughly exposed to culture," counting it off on one finger, "second, you have never lived it down—or else someone has not let you. Third, you can't determine what is the proportion of personal freedom to other interests and fourth—you are as antiquated in your convictions as your own Korean embroideries."

"Go on," ordered Jones as she paused to see the effect.

"I'm afraid you believe in sentimentality—not sentiment, you don't admit the law of acceleration which operates whether or no, sweeping aside the old to make room for the new. That unless today includes tomorrow, it is useless, stale—shall I go on?"

"Proceed," Jones was conscious that Justine had an amazing effect on his mental horizon, as an electric battery sometimes stimulates dying nerves. She was emboldened, iconoclast that she was.

"Whereas once limitations proved your inspiration, now they augur destruction," she swept on, "I know I sound as if I were to become one of those frankly-forty type always so interested 'in the psychology of things!' But, really, I never will. I'd prefer being a lacquered adventuress holding forth at slightly passé Riviera resorts, it would be less to my credit but infinitely more jolly!"

"Nonsense," he interrupted, "as if you would ever think of——"

"S-s-sh, I'm the one to vivisect—you don't understand me."

"You might at least tell me how you became such an adept."

"Many things helped. Taking charge of a wicked, lovable parent most of all. Wandering about the globe and meeting the sort of people one reads of but manages to avoid meeting. I've seen very little that Bædeker stars, you're the kind apt to see everything he stars, if you had to stay up until dawn to get it all in——"

"Libel!" he declared, "do I look like the victim of a starred Baedeker?"

"I wanted to make you growl," she confessed, "no, you wouldn't impress me as being wholly guilty. I've been guilty of so many things but none of them Bædeker would consider starring. I even went on as an extra in a Monte Carlo movie staged near Monterey—so did dad. I got five dollars a day for exposing myself to the fog and fleas of sunny California. Still, one of the leading women gave me a silver lace hat which ought to make me grow well and strong—but let's talk more of you——"

Jones looked at his watch, "I'm due at a directors' stodgy meeting," he said frankly, "I'm going to send you home. You didn't think I'd be blunt and practical, did you? This soft headed, lower class altruist who tried telling you someone bought your picture not twenty-four hours after it was exhibited. I think I'll behave rudely for some time—yours was a foul suspicion."

"Since I'm dismissed, I may as well have the last

word," she whispered, "this has been almost the most interesting time I ever had."

"What was the most interesting?" was his demand.

She pursed her lips as she reflected. "Oh—one summer we spent in Turkey with a rich bohemian set Tom was trying to outwit—they had an entree to circles behind the throne, very Arabian Nighty! We lost out and had to flee to a place in Bavaria where they only sold postage stamps and beer, to catch up financially."

"And our little lunch comes next in your estimation?" Jones said slowly, "I am glad."

She shrugged her shoulders as if sorry to have admitted as much.

"Don't be pettish," he commanded, "remember, you are the tarnished aristocrat, I'm of the snug middle class that your sort like to see walking hot ploughshares. We are in America and therefore, bound to compromise. I'm going to take care of your career—and yourself—as much as your unpleasant spirit will let me. I've wise plans for you—just as dear old Hamlin had plans for me and they came to pass, too! You may call me a fool, a social climber, a lonesome man—anything you wish. It cannot affect the situation. There is no need to feel patronized or enraged. In the orient all imbeciles, no matter how lovely and what charming portraits they make, are considered wards of the government and cared for accordingly. I've decided to adopt the custom as concerns yourself."

Justine's answer was characteristic. "So kind," drawing on her gloves, "but sometimes things are apparently alike yet far removed upon close inspection. For instance, there is a certain daring charm and color in a crazy quilt but it is not art."

"Perhaps caring for a fascinating imbecile may not be municipal custom but a matter of personal devotion," was his parting thrust.

Some men friends came up just then and he introduced Justine to prevent further repartee.

CHAPTER XXXII

It was several weeks before Justine met Jones' mother. Realizing that Justine was not a follower but a co-seeker, Jones shrank from introducing her to his mother—since she hinted of the former's downfall.

All of which Justine surmised, as she had surmised Jones' attitude towards life. Critical analyst that she was, it was Jones' personality not his success which interested her. She had been too long accustomed to standing off her father's creditors, deciding which course was best for him to pursue, not to realize that Jones was unconsciously agonizing over what he tried to sublimate in unwise or futile ways.

It was small shock to her when she discovered Bertha Mullen's identity, shrugging her shoulders over the news although her eyes darkened with dissatisfaction. It was shortly after this gossip had reached her that Jones insisted she come to the lodge and meet his mother.

Justine still cherished the European notion of a call—do not go unless you have something to offer in return. She knew she had nothing to offer Mrs.

Bynight unless it might be the truth! There was nothing in common between these two except Martha's tyrannical worship of her son and Justine's modern, intense love for him of which she was neither ashamed nor sentimental. Likewise, a sunrise to Justine was the inspiration for a new canvas; to Martha it was an assurance of an excellent washday. Yet Jones, lovable idiot, authority on Egyptian design, felt certain these two would be the best of friends.

At the outset Martha resented Justine. She considered her supercilious and regarded her jacket and tam of gray leather with a brief, pleated skirt completing the costume as anything but suitable for this supposedly talented young person to whom her son was devoted. Martha feared Justine just as she pitied Bertha and was not, at heart, sorry when either of her daughters had occasion to demand further aid from Jones.

She felt a comic supplement person in her teagown of lace caught here and there with velvet roses. Jones had asked her to wear it. After Justine had been in her presence ten minutes, she was like an onlooker shot down from Mars.

"Women have come to where they must choose," Justine had remarked, "they must choose because they have become cables, no longer single, frail threads but many-sided, conflicting yet connected strands. No woman confines herself to one narrow interest or attachment, even women of average position and brain are interested in a number of things

and therefore not to be judged by any one person who may only know but one strand of the cable. Life is much more interesting even if more complex."

To this Martha, thwarted cable, made no reply. But began an elaborate description of a centerpiece vase she wished Jones would send up.

"It has a frog with holes in his back—you put flowers in them—and around the bowl rim is a little fence—as if the frog were in a pond."

Jones made a note of the same.

"Have you looked up many old friends?" his mother asked Justine.

"Two—to my sorrow. The first had the idea that to retrieve the family reputation I must become a cowed retainer of the rich—you know—the sort that stays in a house rather than have it closed—and arranges flowers for formal affairs and addresses the cards and reads out loud to the family valetudinarians. She was certain I could work up quite a clientele. Just because I was born a Dunlevy, I told her I'd rather go to perdition," Justine laughed.

"Sensible decision," applauded Jones.

"But don't you think?" objected Martha, "it might have been wise not to refuse outright—painting is such—such—" she paused confusedly.

"She can paint, that's the splendid joke on all of them," Jones announced, "they'll park their rickshaws at your studio before the year is out."

Justine smiled indulgently. "But the other friend —that was comedy. Having cooked over a gas jet,

so to speak, for longer than I can remember, I admit to a deliberate Sybarite greed when I called on the Pointdexters. I hoped to sit in state at a well laid table, decently trained servants, candlelight, more conversation than food, flowers—that sort of thing. They were glad to see me—even enthusiastic! And asked me to stay for Sunday night supper—but, said they, 'We are going into our playhouse to cook and play housekeep—we do so almost every week—it is such a lark. You are in time to help —would you rather make an omelette or wash the dishes afterwards—everyone must do something!' "

"But an omelette is easy," Martha protested, "that needn't have worried you——"

Justine and Jones exchanged glances.

"I was not worried but bored. I was not seeking nourishment but an escape from sordidness."

Tea interrupted the discussion during which Justine took the lines of least resistance. She found herself praising and agreeing with this story book mother. Only once, to Martha's horror, did she make a rash statement and that was when she calmly asserted that anyone of intelligence could love more than one person at a time. Which Martha interpreted as her intention of "not caring how many people Jones was involved with—she was out to get him, no matter what!"

Jones was not sorry when he took Justine away, keen to learn her reactions but reluctant to hear his mother's.

"Like my lodge?" he asked as they drove off.

"Immensely and the quaint air of your mother's rooms—the dressing table, for instance, with those dotted white drapes tied with blue and doll ladies holding rosy parasol lamps—you thought of that!"

"I didn't mean you to speak as an interior decorator," he insisted, "come on, you who scorn beating about the bush! Don't you know it means everything to me—just what you think?"

Justine faced him squarely. "It will be too awful if we both care very much," she said softly, "like satires engineered by old Voltaire behind that gaudy drapery of the French revolution—it could never come out anyway right—never!"

He put a big hand over her small, firm one. "That has nothing to do with it—you who told me I must live in today and not the past——"

"While all the time the past dominates, destroys you," she answered.

"You care, don't you?" he whispered.

"More than is safe, more than I want to," staring at him like an angered sexless sort of sprite, indignant at being confronted with mortal emotions. "You with your lovely, selfish mother, letting infantile devotion be your inspiration and me with a rascally coward for a father—breaking away from him, judging him without mercy. How could we ever hope to agree? How can I have first place in your heart? I won't admit you have first place in mine—I'll say I want success more than anything, to satisfy every starved longing for recognition, applause. You don't know what it means to be

pulled down, down—you'd hate whoever did it, wouldn't you?"

"She has helped me be lifted up, up," he reminded, her, "wouldn't you be grateful, eternally tender? But, again, that has nothing to do with our love—you are first in my heart as I am in yours," he kissed her.

Justine gave an angry cry. "In your heart perhaps—but not your life—dear man, not hearts but life matters!" She turned to stare at the whirling scenery.

Jones put his arm about her. "Let me explain, dearest, let me——"

"You will talk of waiting," she said in an abrupt, boyish way, "waiting—until what? Your mother's death? Wince all you like. At least, I've said the truth. As your shop girls would say, 'I'm not a perfect lady!' There is something culpable in the morals of such—they can never be themselves. If I'm the tarnished aristocrat, I'm trying to rub off the stain—shine brandy new. It has usually been done by marrying well but I prefer another method."

"So you love me," he persisted clumsily, "I'm not worthy personally—any more than any man ever thinks he is when he meets the right person——"

"You mean Bertha, that pitiful lump who is silenced by a new hat or enraged by lack of one? Who boasts of your friendship, trade on it—the gossip of every rooming house—why, Jones, don't you know that I consider Bertha just a symbol?"

Jones withdrew his arm. "Please," he said

hoarsely, "it hurts to hear you—like old lace dipped into a cheap dye."

"We are almost at the house," looking out of the window, "let's decide not to go on—it is the quickest way. I abominate indefinite situations—" the machine was slowing down.

"May I come tomorrow?" he begged, helping her out, "if you won't let me see you, I'll buy six of your pictures and pompously hand you the money in front of Halliday—you'll have to make a scene. Come, I'm quite determined—I must tell you a good many other things before we decide."

"Where can we talk?" she said suddenly, "not in a lodging house, a restaurant," was her only objection.

"My own home."

"But we just came from there——"

"My study—with your picture. We will not have to disturb anyone else. Let me drive you out after dinner," he spoke sharply as if it were a business matter.

Justine shook her head, impossible to be displeased. "Why do I say yes when it is all so useless, so lovely, such a waste of time!"

Unconscious of the curious passersby, Jones bent and kissed her hand. "Why? Because the only thing that makes life bearable is what may happen when we turn the corner," was his answer.

Before he reached home, Jones realized his mother was not the first woman in his life. He walked around the parkway circling his lodge before entering

the house, planning how to be fair to everyone—and to love Justine. When he came into Martha's rooms, his determination to marry Justine was so great that he offered no evidence of what was transpiring, there was no intermediate stage of wavering. A less determined person would have betrayed uneasiness, indulged in telltale comments.

"Not in bed yet, dear?" he said gently.

"Not sleepy—I've been thinking about something that I've thought of for weeks—whenever I started telling you, you were tired or busy. There has never seemed any good chance. It is something I am more interested in than anything else in the world—after you."

"Then let's hear it," was his cheerful invitation, wondering why she did not mention Justine. But with Martha, too, motives were concealed.

"It's the need for a community church out here," she began timidly, "I'd like so well to help build it —or at least ask you to help me. An old-fashioned notion—but then, I'm too old to change in ideas. The little church would be my idea of something worth-while, it need not be costly, nor denominational and there would be no strings to it in the way of arranging services and so on. I want to have a building ready for people who want to worship when and how they like. I'd like to see the church completed before too long . . . I wonder if, instead of spoiling me in every other way, you'd mind helping with this?"

"A fine idea and like you to have it," was his

answer. "Yes, I think I can promise that you shall have your wish."

When she smiled, an irritating expression of delight, he responded with a listless grin. Leaving the room, he added with studied ease:

"How did you like Justine?"

And his mother forced herself to answer. "An unusual but alarming person—poor thing, I hope her work meets with success."

CHAPTER XXXIII

"I'LL revel in this library with all its booky loveliness," announced Justine when she came into the room, "as for definite conclusions—this conversation will be merely verbal tag."

Jones did not answer. He was rather uneasy because he had not mentioned Justine's visit to his mother, this night might prove one of Martha's restless affairs during which she prowled. He was irritated because such a possibility detracted from the vital issue.

He established her in a properly effective chair while he took to the firebench, his long legs getting tangled up in the rugs.

"A new frock?" he asked in a commonplace manner, as if they had all the time in Christendom to discuss momentous questions.

"Another remnant," Justine glanced at her slim, gray gown with its transplanted Egyptian designs, "if I bought new things they would have to be the pay-as-you-wear-them sort—I'd rather manage in my remnants."

She glanced up at her portrait, the dominating note, then at Jones sprawling awkwardly on the settle.

"You talented clown," she commented, "you can't make things come out evenly, can you? Two plus two are apt to make five in your case."

"Why are you looking at the picture?" he spoke resentfully.

"It seems such an abortive attempt to have someone share your life."

"The original will soon share it."

She shook her head. "Very pretty—but I'm not sentimental. Whatever else I suffered at Tom's hands, I thank him for not becoming a victim of over-attachment or belief. We speak a different language, Jones, and no one can prove diplomatic interpreter."

"Love doesn't need any," he insisted, reaching over to pick up an ornate papercutter and trace designs with it on the polished settle.

"I don't know," he added, "that love has changed since the stone age bloods pummelled their chosen ones into submission and said chosen ones took their punishment with coquettish surrender."

"I know," Justine corrected, "love has changed greatly." Her brows drew together as if she disapproved of the remark. "You forget that in the same accepted manner the stone age bloods treated their chosen ones to blackened eyes and 'cauliflower ears'—older members of the tribes were also pummelled into oblivion as soon as their uselessness was established, a drastic but not totally unkind method."

Jones tossed the knife aside. "You unfeeling little ogre!" he began.

"Not at all—merely more frank than is considered good form, I have said a significant thing—therefore, I must apologize."

"Sometimes you seem the most calloused person I have ever known—your own portrait would blush for you. At a time when most women would at least pretend to blush, your poise would entitle you to be presented at court without a quiver."

"Thanks. Let us keep to facts, not quibble over personalities—after all, life doesn't readjust itself as deftly as a jigsaw puzzle. To all intents things seldom turn out as they should—or as we'd like to have them. He who sacrifices most is often the heaviest loser—so on. If life were a jigsaw puzzle, your mother having accomplished drudgery would achieve the artistic, become equally cultured, atune with your interests. She knows she is not, unconsciously her attitude has become that of a tyrant in self-justification. She treats you as a possession—not an individual."

"That is not untrue—but what of it?"

"She stands between us—or rather, she would pretend Bertha Mullen stood between us while she hid behind the former."

Jones flushed. "Sorry you have to say such things," he began.

"I sha'n't say many more," her arms folded across her chest in judicial attitude. "I am a calloused, as you say, modern woman who has the misfortune to love you. I am exacting, imperious in that love. I resent for you every parasitical demand made upon

you by your family—I wish you had neglected them, whether it would have been right or wrong, instead of being the generous, soft hero with cheap antidotes for his heroism."

"Why make such statements?" he protested, "you don't mean them."

"You would prefer my using that figurative, dishonest language such as 'when the stork came'—evading facts by stating symbols! Getting nowhere at all except Robin Hood's barn! I don't incline toward the Rogers' Group attitude of mind. I can calmly discuss Bertha as I can your mother—and myself, if you want me to."

"So you blame me," he said thoughtfully, "I thought you would. Yet what else could I have done? Answer that as honestly as you analyze the outcome—remember, our family had no background, no traditions for us to fall back on, be tided over because of—it was new and tender and very uncertain—our family unit. Should I have married, cut lose to leave the girls and mother when they needed me most?"

"Hardly," her voice was sharp but her eyes gentle, "the first step of this climb was made when your grandparents married in public to gain some furniture. After that, by the scheme of American progress, there was small chance of turning back. The Bynights were doomed to rise, as the Dunlevys to sink. Seesaw—you are merely part of the pattern, your mother the dominating motif. Upon her depended how far you, per se, would go. If you had

not made the top step your children would—it is all so inevitable, so poorly planned! I'm not really blaming—I'm understanding. She can't realize what she has done *to* you—all she realizes is what she has done *for* you. You are bereft of personal liberty. You can write a check for many figures, pack your trunks and go off to buy a Florentine villa but you can't stand up and say, 'I am a free agent—I shall marry—live apart from old ties.' "

"In a sense I can," he came over and suddenly took her in his arms.

"That means," pushing herself free, "you expect me to live with your mother—be subservient to her—join you in your hypocritical worship. No, I love you too much."

"Why can't you love her just a little—estimate her worth?"

"Stupid, stupid, that has nothing to do with it. I do love her."

"Then why hesitate—why all these unpleasant statements——"

"Love is not paramount in this situation. I've been trained to avoid every unnecessary thing, as you have been trained to attempt the unnecessary. Perhaps we are both wrong."

Jones insisted on facts with unexpected bluntness. "So you refuse to live here with mother although you would be in authority—you would ask her to leave here—exile her, as it were?"

Justine smiled. "I would. And now you'll start hating me!"

"I could no more hate you than I could comply with that wish."

"I warned you this would be a useless evening."

"As for—" hesitating.

"Bertha?" her brows black peaks of anger, "why prolong the uselessness?"

Jones walked to the mantel, resting an arm on it, his free hand jangling discordantly among the fire-irons. "Perhaps I'm a coward," he admitted morbidly, "at any rate, a sorry figure I cut in your eyes."

She shook her head. "You can't be impersonal—there's the rub. You aren't able to step aside, consider yourself as someone else. You have been too enmeshed in the personal climb. I don't doubt your love—but it is a pale, flabby emotion. I refuse it." She rose.

"Don't go," he begged, "I realize I've not come to your decision but we must work out a compromise—you can't expect me to take your viewpoint instantly, sweep aside everything I've worked and fought for—wanted you to share—to be tolerant —magnanimous——"

"No sophistry, Jones—either flat contradiction or a clear vision."

"You underestimate her worth," pointing towards his mother's rooms. "If you knew one tenth of all she has endured, struggled for, managed——"

"I realize—not first hand, of course—but I do realize. It is what I tried telling you. This situation is life, dominated by neither sentiment or justice.

Very likely, she experienced a similar reaction towards her mother-in-law. That was life, too. I only wish we had never met—that you had continued in your fantasy of knowing the picture—which merely took up wall space and required occasional dusting," her voice was so direct it reminded him of stinging arrows, "but we may as well face the situation and not pretend. I'm going to be socially revived, I can feel it! Already old friends are asking me to their large, second rate things and this has come about through your efforts and your gallery advertising. I'm Justine Dunlevy the artist, not wild Tom Dunlevy's neglected daughter! And you are going to continue in your personal squirrel cage, sending nephews to college and nieces to the bridal altar, buying your mother every superfluous luxury you can find and the other women gewgaws—and some day, when it is too late, you'll discover you've missed the whole point of the thing, you'll be an eccentric old bachelor with too much money and too high blood pressure while relatives and quacks are not quite displeased as to the situation," she swept up her cape as she spoke and walked from the room.

Jones followed; he did not try to argue further nor to drive in with her. He saw her into his car with the carelessness he would have shown one of his mother's friends.

"Good night," he whispered, "it will all come right."

"Good night," she answered, "it has all come

wrong. But we'll survive—when you admitted you fell in love with a picture, I knew it was fatal."

"Why?" refusing to close the car door.

"It was illogical. You should have fallen in love with the original and had the portrait as consolation during the days of widowhood!" Deftly, the car door closed.

Jones first of all went by his mother's door to see if it was closed, laughing at himself for the habit. Then, sitting before Justine's portrait, he studied it critically.

"I feel certain I am not going to marry you," he announced softly, "you are going to marry me!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

Bertha Mullen bided her time to speak of Justine, although she had every intention of conducting a question box regarding this newcomer. Bertha's program, outlined by Poppy, was concerned with ingratiating her in the favor of Jones' mother rather than rousing Jones to neglect by her tearful scenes.

One cannot be a Jones Bynight or a Justine Dunlevy without the fact of their mutual attraction becoming known. Old friends of the Dunlevy's, including Mrs. Hannibal Hamlin, beamed on Justine not alone for her art but her expected future as Mrs. Jones Bynight. That personage would be someone not to be scorned. Meantime Bertha's intimates said the sarcastic, cheap "I-told-you-so" things which brought to the surface every vicious atom of Bertha's make-up.

It was what she should expect was what she heard from all sides, she might have known Jones would make a fool of her. Her sole weapon, pitiful in its frailty was "his mother likes me." Just as no one knew how much truth there was in the statement, no one knew how hard Bertha worked to make this come about. Even Jones would have been amazed

at the effort she expended. To Jones Bertha was more and more the aggrieved, lonely woman seeking to please his mother, becoming annexed to his family in a vague way.

Some ten days after Justine told him goodbye, during which he had only glimpses of her, Bertha broached the subject but with little solace.

"If he says he is engaged," Poppy advised, "ask him for a lump sum right then and there, say you'll raise the devil if he don't come through. We could start a nice little shop with it—you and me."

"I don't want money," Bertha argued untruthfully, "how about my feelings?"

This was too absurd and beside the point for Poppy to answer!

Jones listened to her accusations of "that Dunlevy woman—dear knows she lived from hand to mouth, her father was no better than he should be and she haughty as a princess, instead of a good honest job, painting away at pictures and getting Jones to sell them! Was it true he was in love with her—he must be since he made her famous in the city, sticking her things in the windows with fabulous price-marks—oh, how could he be such a fool, disloyal pal, toady, etc., etc." Bertha broke down at this point.

Those monogrammed shirts and scarfs and handkerchiefs—what had her willing fingers not made for Jones—the embroidered, knit, crocheted, tatted articles she had done for his mother—was she not, too, something of an artist? Yet she never received recognition beyond a careless thank you, an invita-

tion to some place where no one worth-while would ever see them! Perhaps he was ashamed of the things, labelled them as impossible, crude—still, she had done them for him with no thought of self gain. Besides, the pictures this Dunlevy person did were not worth the second glance—her vases seemed like thawing icicles and her roses like spilled cans of tomato soup! Yet he hailed her as a coming artist—just because she was a Dunlevy—so, after all, he was a snob. But he must not forget his promise, not to marry unless she was willing—and she was not. A fine daughter-in-law this haughty beggar would be for his dear mother who had brought his success to pass—oh, men were the wretches—every last one of them. She was glad she had no sons to be ashamed of her! Come, what was the truth—was he to be married—tell her!

"I have little hope of marrying Miss Dunlevy," Jones said in his quiet, final way.

"Have you asked her?" Bertha screamed, unable to restrain herself.

"I have little hope of marrying her—the matter does not concern you. Little that I do does concern you. I am not interested in what you do."

"No, you would not care if I lay dead—only to be glad," she was hysterical, beyond shrewd questioning.

"I should not be glad," rather bored by the situation.

"I should—I've nothing to live for."

"Have any of us?"

Her round eyes glittered at him. Then she resumed. "Did she think herself too good for you—I'm sure it was not consideration of my feelings! Without a second dollar to her name and her father a cheat. Who does she expect to marry," her red hands on her hips as her head tossed in mockery, "Milady Dunlevy—a fine one to set herself up."

Jones' hand shot out until it was stopped by a stinging sensation, he had struck Bertha across the mouth.

"I beg pardon," he said presently, nauseated at the incident. It recalled those long ago, hideous quarrels with his father as presiding tyrant, usually Jones the innocent victim of his wrath.

Bertha clung to him, won by the blow. The ancient notion that a man who beats one must care considerably still lingered in her mind.

"It is awful to be neglected, darling, think of the first years—when there wasn't any Justine—and you were so lonesome—we were good pals, weren't we?"

"Yes, yes," wondering how he could break away, "and if it satisfies you, I am not expecting to be married. But leave her name out of our conversations."

Reporting progress to Poppy, Bertha was undecided as to what to say.

"He was so sore when I slammed her that he slapped me," she admitted, "I think the little fool turned him down—he's not very good at lying."

"Then you're safe," Poppy pronounced, "because he's not the kind to care often."

Mollified, Bertha began embroidering a dresser set for Mrs. Bynight.

. . . . . .

The fashionable spring kettledrum held by the allied charities was occasion for Jones to talk further with Justine. He had had only stray moments with her during the long tedious interim during which he paid superficial compliments regarding her work while she made equally superficial answers. Justine was tense as an unsprung trap, resentful of her love for Jones because she was keen enough to admit its hopelessness. His clumsy efforts to send flowers and books, to meet her unexpectedly both pleased and irritated. Justine was out to prove that an indefinite situation was one which had no excuse for existing and those who were a party to it were culpable. Her review of the matter was something like this: She loved Jones—very good and also very bad. She was happy because he loved her. But it meant little in the future. Jones reminded her of a man who had climbed to the mountain peak, seeming to be a successful explorer. Yet, reaching up from the valley was a fine, strong cord which fastened about his foot in order that he never forget his original starting point. What should sever that cord?

Justine was removed from such entanglements, her birthright had been free of them, no matter what its other handicaps. No slavish gratitude towards someone who helped banish an impossible past entered into her calculations. Paradox that it was, she would not have loved Jones had he not possessed

such emotions. It proved his fineness that, no matter what his success, he would never ignore she who inspired it. Therefore, the thing for Justine to do was to forge ahead in art—and love Jones in her heart. Love was but one angle of anyone's life. She had seen more angles at twenty-six than most women do at sixty!

Jones brought his mother to the opening of the kettledrum. She had been asked to dress in an 1860 costume and pour tea but refused, contributing generously to the tea-table fund instead—to everyone's relief.

Jones who had been general benefactor and adviser had occasion to consult Justine who had been "socially revived to the extent of being in charge of the fishpond for the crippled children's guild" as she told him, also taking orders for bookplated designs "to aid a young woman of mature years and immature pocketbook."

He was amused at her crisp manner, making him feel that to lapse into romantic remarks would be as out of place as to have a Santa Claus impersonator at a Fourth of July celebration.

"But you can't keep me at arm's length always," he warned, the day the kettledrum was to begin, "don't delude yourself."

"You think not?" she said quietly, "did you say one or two dollars for a chance at the fishpond? I think one dollar quite enough."

"Make it a thousand—then you won't be crowded—and I can have more time with you."

A bevy of "Buff Orpingtons," as Jones called the patronesses, swept down to ask if "dear Mr. Bynight would come watch the Spanish dancers, the tableau at the end of the number was fearfully lame—and would Miss Dunlevy step into the office? Mr. Finlay wanted to speak about his bookplate order."

When Jones brought his mother to Justine that evening, Martha was embarrassed. The brilliancy of the affair dazzled her. Since she had abandoned trying to keep pace with modern events, such a gay, noisy scene as this with people trying to attract her son's attention and assault his bankroll made her wish she had pleaded fatigue and remained at home.

Jones felt he ought to bring her, it was not right to come alone. The fair would do her good. Besides, he was still eager that she make friends with Justine. But the moment he looked at Justine's regal self wearing a smouldering red brocade and a diamond coronet on a level with her dark, even brows, he realized he had attempted the impossible.

"So glad both of you are here," extending her hands, "You shall not escape until I've exacted toll. By the way, I'm unusually elegant tonight, see my joo-els! This coronet was mother's, an old friend bought it when the crash came. She happened into town a few days ago and I felt no hesitancy in accepting the loan. It is wonderful to be wearing some of mother's pretties—she was such a boo'ful person, like the fairy tale illustrations of queen-mothers."

"It looks as if it had always belonged to you,"

Jones commented, "I never remember seeing you look more charming—did you, mother?"

"Never," there was a sadness in Martha's voice.

"I only meant the coronet, not myself, my disposition is ingrowing for I loathe charity bazaars and yet," shrugging her sloping white shoulders, "I shall make many sales through having been a nice, tame thing, dedicating three evenings to selling nonsense. The people who patronize your booth seldom realize how dearly they are going to pay for the sport. Have a try at the fishpond, Mrs. By-night, now do!"

Jones laid a bill on the table. "Let's see if you corral a whale or worry a minnow," he urged, "that's the way—aha—now, what is it?"

Martha unwrapped the small package, a lace-edged powder puff.

"I shall give it back to be refished for," she said, "it would be of no use to me."

"You're a dear," praised Justine, "would that everyone would do likewise, we could give the crippled children gold-plated crutches. How about a bookplate—half of the price goes for the same cause, you know."

Martha shook her head. "I write my name in," she confided, "those labels always seemed like a public library. Jones has one."

"But an impossible thing that someone gave me years ago—I want one of your designing—come. I insist," with mock seriousness, "you must study my aura and lay bare the esoteric secrets of my

soul in your black and white symbols. How does that sound?"

"You mean it?" she asked softly.

"Of course—I've meant everything I ever said to you," his finger tips as they laid down another bill for deposit managed to touch her own.

Martha studied the crowd.

"I don't believe you would use the one I would design——"

"I have ordered a bookplate—you don't dare refuse me!"

"You shall have one—howdy do, lamb pies, prepare for the worst of shearings," turning to acquaintances who lingered nearby.

"Good night, Miss Dunlevy," Martha was eager to be away, "I'm sure your booth is going to be a great success."

The rest of her visit, Martha kept close to her son's elbow. She felt disturbed and disapproving. She thought these people chattering, superlative dolls not cognizant of the vital needs, incapable of real self-denial. This kettledrum served as an excuse for displaying their surface charms and permitted scandalous excitement. Her personal, limited method of charity was still her measuring stick for all the rest of the world. She thought Jones far too generous although it pleased her to see how important he was among them and to hear his praises sung.

She prevailed upon him to leave shortly after ten o'clock. Laden with foolish purchases and gay favors, they left the hall.

"Don't you want to go by and say good night to Justine?" he asked.

"She is busy, I won't bother . . . she did look beautiful," as if to sugarcoat her refusal.

So Jones did not go by either. He decided to take his mother home and return to see if he could prevail upon Justine to accept his escort. She had seemed tantalizing, a thousand times more attractive and aloof in her setting this evening. He began wondering how much emotion she was capable of experiencing, could her sudden success compensate for the absence of all else?

CHAPTER XXXV

"My, that thing cost a sight of money," Martha commented as they drove homeward, "seems to me if they'd take the same amount and use it for the poor the whole thing would be easier and get quicker results."

"But no one would have had a good time," he explained, "this fair, while stupid and wasteful to a degree, furnishes blasé grown-ups a legitimate chance to make fools of themselves, a mighty wholesome purpose in itself! We all need such a chance—you saw those men dressed as infants with nursing bottles that people filled with coins to be used for a diet kitchen of some sort—now, they enjoyed that as much as the people who depend on the diet kitchen. The Mother Goose characters got real thrills from being ridiculous—so did all the dancers and singers and even Justine with her mother's diamond coronet is experiencing normal self-conceit, standing behind her fishpond and holding up members of society for orders. The memory of such a time makes everyday living easier—don't you see?"

"I don't," objected his mother, "I was too hard at work for too long to know much about playing.

None of these pepole drudged—they work with their brains—or dimples—but not their hands. And their brains weren't worried almost into a fever trying to plan how to pay the bills with nobody helping but you, dear," patting his arm. "I guess playing Mother Goose characters or being a Gypsy fortune teller wouldn't have much attraction for them after that."

Jones was silent. "You liked the art booth?" he asked presently.

"I guess it was splendid—you said so. But I felt out of place tonight, I wish I had never gone."

"Why?" he asked with patient politeness.

"It reminded me of something. One winter—I never told this—things were pretty lean with our family and your father was acting his worst. My eyes gave out from sewing at night and I didn't have a stray dollar for glasses. I knew I could not let my eyes go—they meant our living. I had borrowed all I could from friends and so—when you children were at school and your father sleeping off his drunk —I sneaked off and applied to the poor master!"

"Mother!" every selfish and sentimental idea seemed clouded.

"Yes, so I did. It was mighty hard. The questions they asked, the red tape, the awful people you have to sit with until your turn comes. He acted as if I was a cheater, said I was so much better off than most he hadn't the right to do much. I told him I didn't want anything but free medical attention—finally, he decided I was 'worthy' and sent me to a free medical dispensary! I waited two hours and

then lost my turn because I had to hurry home and get dinner. I went back the next morning but it was only for ear and nose cases! I waited about a week trying to see the doctor. Then your Aunt Min came to see us and gave me ten dollars on the side—that was one reason I sent her all I did last Christmas—and I went to a doctor and asked if he would see me for that much. I had to save my self-respect. He charged me five for the examination and I used the frames of your grandmother's glasses and the lenses just came within the five dollars left over. Can't you see what I mean—that the booth for the blind and all—it made me realize that only a few years ago I was asking the poor-master to help me get glasses—and here you are, head almost of the whole shooting match! I could have given the blind booth a hundred dollars if I'd liked! That has been worth it, after all. Only contrasts hurt—even if they are years apart."

Jones put an arm about her. "You're splendid," he comforted, "we won't ever talk of it again. See here, I've been thinking of your birthday this summer—you're one of the few not afraid to have them—I'm going to insist on the girls' coming back no matter if Pat's beauty parlor goes into a receiver's hands and Marian's university becomes a movie studio. They can bring or leave behind as much of their families as they wish but we must have a dinner with a cake and candles and—a surprise! Such a surprise, too! It will prevent your ever remembering lean wolf days."

"I didn't mean to tell you," conscious she had disturbed him.

"Why not? I want you to always tell anything that bothers."

"You needn't have the birthday dinner, drag the girls on in the heat of summer. I'm not quite childish."

"Don't you want us? To wish and blow out candles and let you pet and scold us? Don't tell me you prefer an afternoon bridge or a day pigeon shoot."

"Of course, I always want all of you—if you feel the same."

He did not return to take Justine home. Romantic self-interest was sidetracked. He read aloud to his mother and then made her an eggnog, feeling quite the competent attendant. After midnight he went to his study to correct proof—glancing at Justine's portrait from time to time.

Bertha and Poppy, however, saw to it they attended the bazaar—not to purchase what both termed "bad buys" or see at near range the social favorites but to scrutinize Justine whom, they learned from the press, was one of the most fascinating young persons present.

Oblivious of this, Justine helped them to fishpond trys, almost bored to tears at the procedure. Bertha's frown concerned her not. She had heard of Bertha through the usual backhanded method of comment but she had never seen her. To her this overweight person in an awful lilac shade gown wearing furs of

Spanish goat like a *nouveau riche* and reeking of musk was merely another monstrosity one must endure for the sake of the cause.

Not until late afternoon when Justine spied Bertha and Jones together, Jones in that unwilling don't-detain-me-please attitude, did she realize who she had served earlier in the day. Despite her dauntless spirit, she was amazed to find that it hurt—even as Martha felt hurt when she recalled ailing eyes and empty purse and was cognizant that her son had bid a hundred dollars for an autographed book of poems.

Bertha and Poppy had waited for Jones' arrival. They sallied up to him in a spirit of conquest. Poppy became concerned with a counter of beaded girdles, leaving Bertha a clear field for reproach.

"Are you surprised to see us here—ashamed, likely enough," she began, "however, she took our money for the fishpond—she is certainly very grand!"

"Don't discuss personalities," he implored, wondering how he could be rid of them, "it's cheap to hang around for me, only to talk of someone who doesn't know or care about any of it. What can I buy you?"

"Take us to supper in the flower-garden tea room," she proposed.

"I'm not able to stay on myself—I'm toastmaster at a club thing."

"Introduce me to your friends," she jeered.

Poppy played benevolent rescuer. "Look at this,

cutie," holding out a coral beaded belt, "this is my choice—what would be yours?"

"I'll have it," Jones told the débutante who was all eyes and ears, "take this jet one, Bertha, it would become you—the two, please—keep the change—thank you so much—ah, glad you came—goodbye—I'll phone."

Before they protested they were escorted to the door, the band drowning out Bertha's unpleasant remarks.

Outside Poppy explained her tactics. "Never stage a big scene unless you've the key to the door," she advised soberly, "you'd have done well raving there with his sort standing around."

Bertha was silent.

"That's as fine a girdle as I ever saw," she added, "shall we go to the Dutch Grill for supper?"

Bertha tossed the girdle away. "I hate him," she said between set teeth, "I hate her—I don't want the thing."

"Hi-missus, youse dropped this," a newsie had overtaken them.

Poppy recaptured the package and gave a dime as reward. "I'll care for it until you come to," she informed Bertha more in sorrow than anger. "Sometimes I think you're getting a little off. I warned you this would all happen but you wouldn't listen. Now I'm trying to fix it so you won't lose."

"I hate him," was Bertha's only response.

"No—her with her swell accent and hair as glossy as a bird's—she is the one you hate. I don't blame

you. I understand. I'd rather remember poor Fred crushed under car wheels than to think of him dancing attendance beside Justine Dunlevy's fishpond!"

That night Jones waited to take Justine home but she would have none of him.

"Mr. Finlay has made up a party—we're going to supper or some such superfluous thing. Thank you just as much," laying clothes over the counters of her booth.

"Finlay," Jones wrinkled his eyebrows. "That Lap reindeer herder! You know his story—rescued by missionaries—educated by them—made a stake in Valdez and had sense enough to spend part of it for a real education, dancing master airs et al! Surely you don't approve of him?"

Justine regarded him thoughtfully. "Is it because he was originally a Lap reindeer herder?" a trifle sardonically.

Jones flushed. "No, a cockney carpenter's grandson has nothing to say about such things—but because he is so fat of body and lean of soul—men loathe him. Clammy, huge hands, pop eyes, bull neck—making headway no matter at what cost."

Justine shrugged her shoulders. "I have worn different frocks for the fishpond and every day he has said something really poetical of them. Today I reminded him of a June sunset—wasn't that pretty?" she was childish in her desire to tease and conceal her own opinion.

"I'd like to shake you," Jones remarked politely, "you've slumped in your work as well—you're trading on your name not your technique."

"I'm about to succumb to interior decorating—Chinese decorations in oil are almost too hi-brow. There are so many stuffy boudoirs I can do in exotic designs—I'm beginning to enjoy having more money than I need, a cab when it storms, week-end parties to enjoy. I don't miss the old days, the game of nip and tuck never appealed. And when I have decorated all the stuffy boudoirs and painted all the furniture and so on, if I can't sell my own things because I won't exhibit in the Bynight galleries for reasons all my own—why—why not an ex-reindeer herder? It suggests Santa Claus, that title—a most delightful person!"

"You think I take you seriously?"

"No, that is why I can't have anything to do with you," dusting the counter with an amusing stage parlor maid air of concern.

"May I take you home tomorrow?"

"No, nor the next nor the closing day—nor ever."

"Was it because—she was here?" he was helpless with shame, anger.

"Which she?" smiling mercilessly. "Your mother was a dear——"

"I say, you're beastly."

"Father said I had that reputation. He had me battle with creditors when I was eight—sometimes I scratched."

"Why can't I see you home?"

"Because we are like two congenial persons, one obliged to live in North America and one in South America. They would like, both of them, to be on a neighborhood basis—lending books, sharing flower seeds and sitting before wood fires of a winter evening, that stimulating intimacy. But one is in North and one in South America so they merely express their wishes and let it go at that."

"I believe in bridges since you stoop to such flowery similes——"

"As for the other, she is unimportant. I admit watching you at the door, sheepish, rude—" Justine was amazed at her ability to falsify. Her fingers trembled as she laid aside the duster.

"I'm sorry I bothered," he said, turning away but she laid a detaining hand on his arm.

"I was going to mail this—the rough design for the bookplate—won't you post it back with any suggestions?"

He hurried out lest he see the obese Finlay taking her arm, wrapping her cape about her. He did not look at the bookplate until he was in his study. Then he realized how wise and tender Justine really was.

The center of the design was a scene from his own near-estate, the front of the house veiled with trees. At the four corners were sketched the symbols of "his aura" or whatever asinine thing he had asked for. A carpenter's chest was one with a laurel wreath and a wee, halfway hidden American flag to tell that "bread labor" might become famous in America. Another was a self-complacent Buddha

—Jones' impersonal life that the world lauded. A third was a palette covered with cobwebs—delayed ambition. The fourth was a conventional Valentine type of heart, around it was a chain so small it required a magnifying glass to confirm the suspicion, the chain leading to a minute cradle. She had told it all! He laid it aside—was there no hint of the future—of herself? Picking it up again he saw entwined about the letters of his name were birds, each flying a trifle higher than the other, hope gradually reaching fruition!

CHAPTER XXXVI

The birthday dinner brought only ennui to Jones, he refused to name it disappointment. Pat and her lively son had been the first to arrive. There was method in this since Pat wished "the first go" at Jones so Owen kindly reported.

Pat lost no time in sharing her secret. She was engaged to a congressman from Pittsburg, a widower whose married children were most affable concerning the event. Although it was to remain a secret until the following June, she felt Jones should know at once. It had been Jones who helped and believed in her, she owed him what money could not repay but she felt her happiness and secure future would be his reward. She had sometimes felt he was ashamed of her beauty parlor—to be sure she manicured the haughtiest of art's patronesses but that was not the point——

Jones interrupted. "One is ashamed only of what they are afraid of," he exclaimed. "And one is afraid of what they cannot understand."

To Pat this sounded like some cult so she did not contradict. She chatted about her fiancé, what a dear he was, a father to Owen and spoiling her most dreadfully. He chaffed at the long, secret engage-

ment but she wanted to turn her business over to Frizz—did he remember her sad story? If she gave it up during the season the customers would go elsewhere but if she made the transfer next June when vacations were on the patrons would return in the fall with their minds intent on opening town houses and aranging affairs and would be twice as apt to stay with Frizz. She wanted to come home and be married if Jones didn't mind, the plan for the community church appealed strongly as the setting—with a reception at the lodge afterwards. She even decided as to this second wedding gown—canary velvet with a head-dress of golden plumes in lieu of a girlish veil. What did Jones think of this? The congressman, Tim Coushaine, had heard a great deal of Jones' store and magazine, he was eager to know him—he would buy a great many new things, too. They meant to send Owen to a good prep school and later to Yale. As for the first Owen, she seldom thought of him. He had justified everyone's worst suspicions, only his monthly pittance keeping him from unpleasant situations.

Jones was not interested with Pat's information. She was no longer helpless, in trouble—further aid was superfluous. As nearly as he could analyze, Pat's scheme of things was a somewhat lazy philosophy to treat everyone as she would like to be treated unless it involved self-denial. She took a sporting chance on things turning out successfully in the hereafter. She did not love the congressman but that in no way interfered with the wisdom of the

marriage. She would do him credit and win for herself a conventional old age. She would grace his red brick house and re-arrange its early McKinley furnishings. She would be good friends with his children and marry her son to a society bud, be considered a model dowager! For what more could one wish?

She glibly praised Jones' new acquisitions in paintings and rugs and called her mother "a dear old dear" and was really eager to meet Justine. Imagine Jones being the patron for a Dunlevy's wares! Wasn't America wonderful? Truth to tell, Pat still manufactured a neat family tree which the congressman and his family had accepted as literal.

She brought her mother no end of trifles—pink satin mules, a green silk boodle bag, Spanish combs set with blue stones, perfumes at twenty dollars the ounce and a false bang of silvery gray curls at which last Martha rebelled without any pretence at politeness.

Pat was polite but not sincere, lavish but not generous, the sort of woman who begrudged money for necessities but never for luxuries—say a sealskin coat at any cost but never mind kitchen aprons. As Jones watched Pat in her orange tulle with black ostrich trim splendor, he wondered how she would have developed if left to her own resources.

He had not expected Justine to have anything in common with Pat. As Justine answered Pat's vivacious, flattering questions, Jones visualized Justine pouring tea, the gracious hostess and Pat

sitting in a visitor's chair—the true and proper way it should have been.

Taking Justine home and talking nothing but commonplaces, odious to both, he returned to find Marian's wire saying which train she was coming on. She was not bringing the children, this was to be a rest for Marian as well as a family celebration.

"I call Justine quite toppo," Pat said as if conferring a high compliment, "a charming girl despite her reverses and too heavy eyebrows. I heard shocking things about her dad—what is there to it, Jones?"

"Jones is very fond of her," Martha hurried to add, "he bought the portrait years before he met the original. Ever since she has come to Cornwall —talented, spirited child—Jones has helped her. Now her hard times are past—you know how it goes, a little success and everyone flocks to applaud. Besides, she was a Dunlevy!"

"Nothing serious between you two?" demanded Pat with concern, "I should hate to believe it."

"Why?" Jones was looking out the windows, planning where to put a new bird-house. He wondered why he had not had the poor taste to have made love to Justine during the brief drive in—at least he could have stood for being called a cad—and kissed her to prove that he was!

"It would never do," Pat said patronizingly, "she is so different from all of us—now my Tim, millionaire that he is, tended bar for Mike Cheney in the early days. He's proud of it—when I let him be! His first wife was a very good person—but limited.

She was a waitress. She never lived to see his political rise—it was better that way, too. As for Justine, I could never talk up to her for long—poor old Bertha would be more comfortable as a steady diet—you rascal!"

Jones made no reply. Martha raised a warning hand but Pat swept on:

"I can't classify as a hi-brow. Because I see how childish hi-brows are, they all fall for my anti-tan and sunburn paste and want their nails clipped the same shape as the popular toe dancer has hers. This girl would keep us on mental tiptoes—she would never choose a filet mignon with trimmings in preference to a cup of orange pekoe and a wafer! She wears that green organdie dress as if it were a queen's ermine. I'm sure she'd quote poetry in the morning and despise a nice screen melodrama, no matter if the production cost a cool million. She'd rather read essays out of a thin, gray book! Oh, no Jones—never—never——"

"I never suggested *you* and Mr. Coushaine marry her," he said, "so why picture the mental cruelty so vividly?" He changed the subject since it was futile to pursue it. He realized it was his own doings that he had ploughed and sown the field for Pat as he had for Marian, that the lack of that first, heroic effort had crippled and limited their understanding.

When he met Marian at the train he was conscious of further ennui—alias disappointment. Marian was a tired yet contented woman shabbily dressed—not

the unusual shabbiness Justine achieved but bespeaking unwise economy. His mother's economy had been wiser—she accepted cast-offs because they were better than the things she could purchase. Marian scorned such aid, she was forever irritated at the physical demands of life. They proved barriers between her wishes, things intellectual. A meal was something to be hurried through so one could do the things they desired. Yet her coat and hat unmistakably bought at a season-end sale were more preferable to Jones than Pat's ultra magnificence.

Marian was happy to see him, she had much to ask and even more advice to bestow. She thought her mother's rooms ideal—she adored Jones' moonlight garden and was in awe of his last pedigreed motor. She wanted to talk over enlarging his Egyptian department along certain lines, Robert had suggested it—he had novel ideas for writing pamphlets to advertise the project. Yes, the children were splendid, the oldest had written a poem for the grandmother's birthday, the youngest a story! It was a relief to be away from the household cares. Poor Robert would have a hard time of it—still, he insisted that she should come. Her eyes were still weak and her back ached if she did heavy lifting. Help was a luxury due to Robert's salary. There were so many things they had to subscribe to and read. They had a Japanese school boy who washed dishes and did other tasks in exchange for his board. The family were to eat at a cafeteria while she was away, it was easier for Robert. He was teaching at

summer school to help prepare for his sabbatical and cooking never was his forte.

"A caféteria?" said Jones, "where you take a tray and march around to select seven cents worth of beans and a penny of butter and so on—the children to come along, too?"

"We always do on Sundays, it lets us get to the organ recital on time and costs little more than if we ate at home," Marian informed him. "Food seems such a nuisance," drifting into news of her own activities until Jones wondered if his sister had joined the army of the intellectually deluded who no longer feared God but complexes and whose wildest story of human interest would be that of the tardy flapper at class and the irritated professor asking, "How will you have your tea?" in hopes of humiliating her, only to be rebuffed by the answer, "Without the lemon, please."

From the moment Pat had descended from the train in company with her son, Jones was impatient for the whole thing to be done with. He even felt more at ease with Bertha and her complaints than these sisters who considered him such a "wonder" and "a dear" and "a generous love."

It was obvious Pat and Marian would not grieve over their parting. Marian disapproved of Pat, analyzed her weaknesses, accused her of a father inhibition whereas Pat regarded Marian as a booky frump and offered a recipe for peeling her skin!

Jones was well fortified for the mutual disapproval

of Justine and Marian by the time he introduced them at the store art gallery. Justine regarded Marian as one of those "incomplete and therefore insufferable persons" and Marian looked at Justine with the pity only intellectuals are capable of extending to one outside their realm. Justine was so poised, sure not only of herself but her ancestors, her assured position for generations was in contrast to Marian's narrowed, nervous horizon. Marian shone to best advantage on the campus; Justine was equally at home in a shabby lodging or a ball room.

He was curious whether or not his sisters analyzed him in his absence, whether they divined the conflict. But nothing of this occurred to either. Jones was still their legitimate prey—and a "dear" as well! They were now somewhat in awe of him. Even Pat refrained from asking as to Bertha although the latter's gift to Mrs. Bynight was a thing of gaudy importance. She did name Justine "high divide" in a spirit of ridicule but Marian was the only one to whom she confided her inspiration.

The reunion was as futile as when people go to New York for the first time to become attune with its ways and find themselves dragging in their own past instead. Since it is difficult to form new ties in the metropolis, they begin telephoning persons they know at home or school and are, therefore, confronted with tag ends of the past, coming away with no knowledge of New York save tourist cafés, theaters and musty gossip!

Jones' surprise—the generous check to cover the

expenses needed in building the community church —seemed boastful, he wished he had given it at another time. He was annoyed at the praise, gratitude, suspecting every remark as being slightly insincere. He would have welcomed some unfavorable criticism such as Justine had made.

He was glad when they were gone, promising to come for the initial Easter Day service that next spring, each tolerant of "mother's funny idea about building a queer church."

"It is pleasant to be alone," Martha said, "I feel younger when I am with you."

"Do you?" he asked, he felt he had closed the doors on an unwise past in which he played the benevolent fool, "well, I'm glad to be alone, since you've confessed first."

"They are all precious to me but none approach your place—in fact, they seem to crowd you out of it. Perhaps I am growing old—narrowed in my ability to be interested or enjoy—I shall be panicky by and by, if I don't have a custard on custard day and junket when junket is due me!"

"You will never grow old," he lied valiantly, it was easier to carry on the pretense without spectators, "You were happy, weren't you? I wanted it to be the happiest of all your birthdays."

"So it was—but you made every birthday happy," she reminded, "do you remember the one when you brought me a footstool you had made in manual training? How many hours you spent on it—what comfort it gave me. You had saved from your paper

money enough to buy two roses, a pink and a white and the boys teased you because I was your girl—and you fought them and got a bloody nose but the roses were not injured! Your father was away that day—we had such a good time baking a cake and making veal salad—as good as chicken—I remember you sat at the head of the table—we all took hold of hands and sang a hymn before we ate!"

"And you never told how bad your neuralgia was—until I wakened in the night and found you walking the floor and moaning—you pretended so beautifully, never failing a chap."

"Nor have you failed! Girls are different. Now—my church—to know that little meeting place is there where all may come—it gives me much joy. And you are the one I have to thank—the same dear son."

"Thank no one," he begged, "we know that the church stands for our love, the finest symbol we could find. Whether I'm a hopeless pagan while you pretend to care about original sin and eternal damnation, that church stands for the love of a mother and her son."

She had meant to speak further about Justine but after this, she refused to torture herself. She wanted to mentally bask in the remembrance of his words—"that church stands for the love of a mother and her son!"

CHAPTER XXXVII

When next Martha would have spoken of Justine, it was too late. She had sailed that next week to join her father in South America. Martha read of it in the morning paper, a guilty fear possessing her. Why when Jones' love offered itself should she go away? After a day intrigued with conflicting emotions, Martha came to no conclusion. Just as she had retired into the boundaries of her rooms, so had she taken refuge in "a mother's feelings." The subject, therefore, remained unmentioned.

That Jones grew unpleasantly grim of face, caustic of speech, listless in manner was not for her to observe. Justine's portrait still hung in the library, she heard her son speak her name to others in that careless fashion of a mere friend who wishes another mere friend well.

Surely there could have been no serious quarrel! Was it that Justine had not cared? Inconsistent indignation at the thought almost spurred her to interrogation.

Meantime the building of the church proceeded, each blow of the hammers that resounded in her

rooms reminded her of the blessed foundation—the love of a mother and son. She could not ask him of Justine! Nor would he have answered.

The news of Justine's sailing had been told by a tertium quid during an afternoon crush. He had not believed it. The tertium quid asked him to verify the rumor at an evening garden party—what a fortunate thing one had cards to everything, otherwise he would have stood on the curb without the Beaux Arts Clubhouse until she left the affair.

That evening when he found Justine, she was surrounded by satellites whom he banished in short order.

"What does this mean?" he began sharply, "the rumor of your going."

"I expected you would come rushing in this evening—I asked Perry Brenton to see you this afternoon, and managed to spread the glad tidings. It is quite true—there is nothing to become hectic about!"

He made her leave the garden party within the hour and they lingered outside on the curb, as if neither had had cards to go within. Jones demanded where he might talk with her undisturbed.

"I'm leaving the apartment Monday, it's a medley of packing boxes— would you mind?"

"Let's go on," he ordered, opening the door of his machine.

The small apartment Justine leased since her social revival was near the building Jones had once lived in, it consisted of the usual living room and kitchen-

ette. He had often called here when Justine wanted him to meet some friend or discuss work without eavesdroppers but she had forbidden him ever since the springtime kettledrum—it was now early August. He found the place in an ugly state with trunks in the middle of the floor, dismantled, shabby walls and the kitchenette betraying an alarming number of streaky washed milk bottles. It was characteristic for Justine to select such an obviously uninviting setting.

"You can't stay long," she announced, tossing off her quaint red chiffon cape, "I prefer even this débris to a hotel where a waiter fairly crowds you with canapes," she sat in a stately carved chair, clasping her hand over her knee.

"Try that box—it is nailproof," she advised, "this chair used to stand in grandfather's study—old Mrs. Tuddicombe bought it at the auction and loaned it to me—wasn't that nice? Thank you for rescuing me this evening, it was quite a drag. I was in the hands of that fluttery woman with the titian transformation, she insisted on telling in her sugary baritone all about 'dear, dirty London!' I was about ——"

"Won't you please get to the main issue," he demanded, "what is it you think you are about to do?"

"I dreaded this final dialogue—I hope you won't be platitudinous or postscripty in your remarks. I'll tell you the truth if you promise not to pace the floor or start in informing me that, 'life is a race' or 'the

clouds are thickest before dawn—,' come, that's a go? Well then," with a toss of her wilful head, "I have refused to marry the reindeer herder or to stay here loving you and mistrusting myself. If I'm going to the devil—even in a refined unsuspected sort of way, I don't want you to come whining about that you are sorry. You would be sorry, no doubt of it. I'm going down to father with no definite plans. I'm telling people I'm to paint miniatures of the socially élite in South America—I may, stranger things happen. Only I want to go away—it was a mistake trying to come here at all. It is a trifle wearing to stay on caring for you and you caring for me and we haggling about the outcome spasmodically—haggling as you once said like women over a cab fare."

In her silver cloth frock with its brilliant scarlet sash and a medieval extravagance of lace, she seemed an aloof, altogether heartless person making pleasant excuses. He felt aggrieved rather than crushed.

"I don't think you'll go," he began, "not if you love me. You will wait a little longer, realizing my position—try to compromise. You can't ask me to turn brute at the eleventh hour?" suddenly, he caught her up in his arms, punctuating his words with kisses on her face and neck.

She pushed him aside. "I refuse to drift," she answered forcibly, "I've seen too many bad things come of the habit. I'm too prejudiced to compromise, too proud to beg! That's rather platitudinous

on my part, isn't it? The only thing I'll promise you is not to faint! If you feel you must serve those who served you, I shall not dissuade you. Only you cannot ask me to serve also. Either I must be first in your life—or nothing. I am nothing. I am not blaming you—there is a tragic amusement about the thing—apparently it is so petty and unworthy of great confusion. And I despise myself for being cold-blooded, clear-eyed. It all comes to this: your mother toiled for you, you warranted her so doing. You have become a great man both in fortune and brain—your sisters are merely side issues of the question. Now you cannot refuse your mother first homage. You can't expect her to be secondary to your 'highborn lady wife' as she would term me. You'll know a Bertha and break your heart over a Justine rather than do so! And she will never realize all the row. I claim it is wrong. A community chapel is not sufficient monument—your children should carry on. So—I'm not going to stay near. Don't protest or plead—just go. If I am the one who is wrong, I'll take the consequences, if you are in error, the consequences will overtake you."

Still Jones battled to explain, the situation was exaggerated, a delicate matter of tender readjustment not tragic desperation—would she not be patient and understand? Surely, if she loved him she would do this much.

Apparently serene in her heartbreak, Justine repeated her alternative. "I don't want you whining about that you are sorry—I don't want to become

one of those drifting, embittered, love-wracked women who are all too plenty these bright days."

So she sailed. After which a telling silence came between Martha and her son, a silence pregnant with things both dreaded to admit.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THAT Justine had refused Bynight's offer of marriage became an assured fact in Bertha's mind. Else why, in the midst of success, would she rejoin her black sheep parent? This also caused Bertha to feel doubly sure of Jones. Poppy had spoken truly when she said he was not the sort to "care twice."

What others said of Justine's departure did not interest her. The erstwhile reindeer herder lost no time in consoling himself with an amiable but light-minded heiress from Kalamazoo. People wondered at Justine's lack of worldly sense—what reason to ally herself again with a peripatetic rouster such as Tom Dunlevy? Others insisted she would return, her trip involved a secret mission to help dispose of said peripatetic rouster.

After she left, someone who did clever silhouettes became the vogue and Jones published a book of his art impressions and a prominent clubman eloped with a member of a Russian ballet so Justine's affairs were shunted into the background.

Bertha was in no haste to ask as to Justine. Life for her was such a settled thing composed of the material joys of over-eating and taking reducing cures simultaneously, buying clothes, indulging in

sob matinees and gossip and never experiencing hardships or mental activities that her conception of Jones had become far from accurate. On the whole, Bertha was satisfied with things—now Justine had sailed. She and her friend Poppy often spent an evening comparing notes as to how many of their married friends had "come out" as well. The majority were shabby viragos, not even the so-called successful matrons could afford the clothes and ease which Bertha did. In her small world, Miss Mullen was someone to be cordially welcomed—talked about behind her back. She still gave card and theater parties and had a monthly dinner club which met at the best hotel in Cornwall.

Bertha now endeavored to be attractive to everyone else save Jones since he looked upon her not as an individual but an albatross. There was no longer that flirtatious attempt of "keeping up for Jones." She could be as sullen or frowsy as she liked. The only thing Bertha regretted was having "been too honest with him at the start—about Jo Willard—my, I was the chump." What once proved her bait now became a threatening boomerang.

"I wonder where Jo is," Bertha often remarked to Poppy, "a married man with children, I suppose —her folks wouldn't let him off."

"I bet his wife isn't as happy as you are," Poppy would comfort.

"No," reluctantly, "still, Jo had a wicked way that I liked."

When, in due time, she mentioned Justine's ab-

sence, she was surprised at the lacklustre answer that Miss Dunlevy had left for an indefinite stay, he really knew little about it. There was a builder's strike on and the work on the church was sadly delayed—he was due at a meeting regarding the same—would she excuse him from staying longer?

"Is that all you've got to tell?" Bertha's temper was now a self-starter.

"What is it you would wish to know?"

"You're the prig, ain't you?" she scolded, "I'm fed up on your begrudged remarks, never saying anything human—if you weren't such a smart man and over six feet—you'd be labelled a Nancy."

"If I stayed away," he corrected, "you'd nag me by phone and letter, visit my mother and wait about until I came home. Not that you want to see me, per se, but you are afraid I will refuse to see you."

"Why do you come here then, since you understand everything so wonderfully? Poppy and me are company for each other!"

"I come because it is the easiest thing to do," he admitted, "women like you have a pitiful capacity for melancholia, retrospection. You may not analyze it—I do. You would miss me so that you would be beside yourself. No matter what your bank account or your friends, you feel denied the natural outcome—marriage. Ugly things are apt to happen when that sort of morbidity gets under way. You are proud of having evaded the responsibilities of marriage. But that never compensates in the ultimate. You are essential to no one—the most dam-

nable fate that can befall any of us. Your attitude is—if you cannot be essential to me by making me happy, you can prove the inevitable thorn in the flesh," he was actually smiling. "Were someone else to become interested in you, you would dispose of me as an old glove—but you are so narrowed and afraid that you can't let go your clutch of me to make room for anything else!"

"You're a queer man," Bertha mused, her temper having faded, "I often wonder how you had the nerve to buy me that first beer!"

Strangely, Jones' patient way of stating facts inspired her with sympathy. She did not repeat what he had said but told Poppy briefly that she was sure she could "still manage him."

During the first of a severe winter when Martha made daily pilgrimages to the building church, listened to innumerable suggestions as to its future, Jones was brought home to her—a tired, ailing child and once more she was happy in important authority.

His nervous breakdown had occurred during a banquet given to the employees, to celebrate the firm's seventy-fifth birthday, one of those elaborate fostering-good-will-and-excellent-advertising affairs which the sensitive few writhe under while attending and the gullable many rejoice over—a holiday menu, professional entertainers and long speeches by the benevolent-minded owners!

Jones, presiding, had suddenly dropped back in his chair in such an alarming manner it caused a frightened stir. Someone helped him from

the room, he was crying inarticulately, someone else called his car and a physician—another member of the firm took his place and explained away the incident—an attack of vertigo, nothing alarming. Jones was taken home suffering from nervous collapse as the morning papers stated "in serious condition and under the care of three physicians."

During the first anxious days when nurses held posts of honor and a daily bulletin was given to the press, Martha forgot the church, substitute for a more vital interest. She seemed a gentle ghost of her former bustling self. There was something for her to do—the girls to write to, Bertha to console over the telephone, the conservatory of flowers to arrange and acknowledge, endless friends to assure that Jones was going to be on the mend. She looked forward to that cantankerous, convalescent stage where she would care for him personally, cook for him, read to him, watch beside him—together they would have sweet hours during which the dismal silence would be broken for all time.

"Too much work," "eye strain," "early hardships" were the causes attributed to the illness. Not until the night nurse was sent away and Martha took up her post with eagerness did she admit the real cause. And her part in it! From his mutterings, halfway finished sentences she heard the truth. He wanted Justine but he could not ask his mother to step aside. Her mistake, like others of her era, had been they thought first—and wondered afterwards. So Martha began to wonder.

Today's daughters wonder furiously, foolishly, yet from it evolve a certain directed thinking which reaches a definite goal, right or wrong being rather accidental! It was too late for Martha to begin directed thinking—there was no goal ahead. She was lost in guilty wondering. True, she had been the means whereby her son became a gentleman but also a tense, lonely soul, physically broken by his mistaken sense of duty. She had not been great enough —or farsighted enough—to step aside when the time came.

During those nights of watching and listening—and wondering—Martha realized the right of it. A white inner peace was hers. She was impersonal, viewing herself as she would a stranger, her early romantic, mistaken marriage, the over-emphasized virtues, exaggerated, serious sense of duty and thwarted personal desires which festered all unheeded. It combined into that agonizing joy of giving her children what she had never had!

No longer was there a legitimate place for her in their homes. In their hearts—yes! Each child, diverse as were their interests, loved her for the straight game she tried to play. But it was an attitude of mind they held toward her—not open arms. Nor did she feel bitter once she realized but rather a regret that it had taken Jones' crash to bring her this wisdom. So many American mothers whose motto for their children was "Up and Coming" have ended in vague wonderings! Her part was to remove herself from her son's environment. How

clearly she realized the conflict between normal hopes and selfless duty which combined to wreck his nerves. She was responsible for Bertha—and her future and for Justine's future if Jones did not marry. At last she had the straight of it: Jones no longer needed her, per se; once this convalescence was ended her baked custards and lavender-cooled linens were things of small import. He needed her tender inspiring memory.

She planned to go into unsuspected exile—and remain. Set out for California as soon as the little church was dedicated Easter Day, insist she was a happy pilgrim eager to see the poppy land at springtime. As she planned, that Jones might bring Justine back as his wife, she told herself with that personal despair all mothers possess whether or no, that she was but one of a splendid, commonplace type, deserving recognition as did the pilgrim mother or the pioneer mother crossing the plains in a schooner wagon. She was the woman who toiled while her heart prayed and her brain planned to give her children broader fields of achievement. There were many Marthas-in-the-middle, it would be well when there were no more! Just as the pioneer mother was no longer forced to snail the plains in the white-topped wagon, so it was unfair to ask that mothers such as she light the torch of educational and social progress and yet, because of enforced drudgery due to mal-adjustment, stand back in the shadows!

Her worn hand rested on Jones' forehead as she thought this last. How tired he was—how frail—

how splendidly mistaken in duty! One coarse task remained for her—remove Bertha, also. There must be no hint of a barrier between himself and happiness. To the end Martha did the drudgery—"troubled with many things."

He must never suspect, that would be her compensation. He must think it "happened" as things so often do! Perhaps she indulged in bitterness when she pictured how utterly Justine would blot out every trace of her own mediocre personality and how complete would be Jones' satisfaction. But before this should come to pass, she must see that Bertha, whose mediocrity was the chosen not enforced as had been Martha's, was out of the situation. Surely Martha who had stooped to drudge could stoop to pardonable intrigue which meant her son's future. She never doubted, fond egotist, that Justine would refuse to return. That part of the finale did not interest her. Always true of petty tasks, she was fully occupied with the present detail.

Martha was competent to deal with Bertha, she understood the practical, sordid side of life. She was glad of Jones' generostiy in the money gift for her church. Part of it must go to Bertha—she would "skimp" to make the rest suffice for the building, an art in which she was well versed. She could sell several trinkets which would help round out the budget of expense. It would be a pleasant sacrifice. How wise that she had kept in touch with old neighbors who knew people who knew Bertha's first and

now-to-be-important lover. One never knew when one would prove useful! Martha was again indomitable, dauntless, brooking no interference. Once she had fought and planned for Jones' first postage stamp album, later a college career, now his marriage.

CHAPTER XXXIX

When Jones reached the convalescent stage, too weak and startled to come to definite conclusions, there passed the last sweet hours between Martha and her son. They re-lived those early years of endeavour. The time when he read *Silas Marner* aloud while she sewed, the evenings spent battling with algebra when popcorn was a delectable feast and his mother's having been a country school teacher an honored tradition. Or when they stole off to sit in "nigger heaven" and see *Macbeth* and his father had been abusively angry upon discovering it. Those college days when he even sent back his washing each fortnight and Martha rejoiced in the labor, never failing to include some toothsome treat upon returning the snowy clothes. The momentous date—when he bought her a brand new hat, the girls tittering about the brightness of its colors!

Into the past wandered these two at will. With Jones it was an antidote to realizing Justine's loss, that he must go on without her, triphammer pulses in his forehead beating as if to emphasize the fact. To Martha it was a sacred summary.

A little later, when Jones began to discriminate as to his menus and call for gorgeous mandarin robes, he was impatient of his mother's devotion. The trip-

hammer pulses had not relaxed in their activity. The charm of re-living the past had vanished—it was irritating to have his mother ever present, alarmed at his slightest murmur. He welcomed the frizzy haired part-time nurse with her flair for baby talk. He demanded long visits from friends and refrained from mentioning Bertha lest his mother ask him to see her. As a last resort, he plunged into business details, began writing editorials for the magazine. He was deaf to the doctor's warning. American nerves were a hash these days—too much business, too little proper play. Bynight should take a year in which to develop a wholesome hobby.

No one understood. Anything was a relief which blurred his vision of Justine. Dear lad, thought his mother, he did not know how soon it was to change! Already, she had set the machinery in action.

"Wonder if the girls will come for Easter," he asked one day in his listless manner, "the church is to be done, is it not?" All the time he was thinking of Justine—where she was, what she was doing——

"I hardly expect them," Martha was answering, "Pat's fiancé and Marian's home ties will prove stronger attractions. You are getting well, I ought not to ask for anything more."

"I've lost track of the building progress—you still hope to have the first service on Easter? It needn't be finished in every detail, you know—fussed up like a boudoir."

"Yes, we can have service . . . come, it is rest

time," drawing the shades methodically. He did not notice how her hand trembled.

"Oh, Jones," she added, "would you like any change in the pictures in here? A favorite one you'd care to have moved in——"

"I'm not gong to stay shut up like a jackknife many more days," he interrupted, "you needn't plan to keep me on spoon vittles. No, the pictures are all right," if only she would go before he actually cried, admitted that to look at Justine's portrait would emphasize the temple pulse beats. Could she never understand or be satisfied? He dreaded the bromidic Easter service although it was weeks ahead, he dreaded returning to work, meeting the world as a well man for whom no concessions were to be made. He protested the whole machinery of existence as cruel, monotonous, futile.

"Heavy weather today," he murmured politely, "are you going out?"

"No—a nap. I'm getting to be quite a pussy cat. Much as I hate to tell you, I'm afraid this must be my last eastern winter. I was shortsighted to ask for a community church when my old bones needed a Pasadena bungalow," kissing him, she disappeared, wondering if he regarded her hint as significant.

It fell on deaf ears. Jones went over to his desk! How many letters had he written Justine in delirium? How many had he sent before the smash? Why speculate when only one had been fully answered?

In it she admitted her father overreached her worst hopes. Drinking steadily, content with life amid tag-ends of humanity, it had been a hideous thing to witness, a grim warning. She became stunned, intimidated because of the contrast between Martha Bynight who once scrubbed floors and Tom Dunlevy who formerly led cotillions. Now Martha Bynight was a gentle cameo, suggesting gracious ease while blear-eyed and besotted of brain, Tom Dunlevy was known as "the old Un" and hailed as comrade by similar soldiers of fortune.

"It makes me a coward," she wrote, "a snob-coward, deadly combination. I am a snob because I am glad he is here where no one will ever know. I am a coward because I want to sneak back to respectability with a bourgeoisie fidelity. I'm afraid of life because of the interlude in Cornwall—I, who prated of it so boldly. If my fingers didn't have a knack for splashing colors I'd choose the reindeer herder. I'm inconsistently stubborn. As it happens, I'm the go in Buenos Aires—father a hundred miles removed—I'm painting double chins and flabby noses with a flattering hand—olive-skinned stupids who pay well and ask little! I shall stay on until the rage passes.

"I admit defeat—does that satisfy you? I still love you. In many ways I have come to respect you for doing the decent thing. I'm no longer cocksure as when I left town. But I won't rush back to marry you and cope with your mother's tragic jealousy and my own petty variety! Ah, the truth is out—I re-

alize we'd struggle for supremacy with you until the last. In making you supreme she created no other heights to turn to for personal solace. I have my brush. You see, I'd pity her and despise myself—a quicksand foundation. And I'd pity you, too, for that fast increasing American combination of a peasant body and a newly evolved patrician brain engaged in neurotic conflict.

"Before I'd come back, I'd have to have the assurance that things would be topsyturvied to suit me—contemptible little me. Then, romantic coward, I'd say yes and rush back to you. And it would smash you, dearest, which would be quite pathetic. So let us each do big things with work and forget personal things. After all, happiness is no engulfing emotion, it is casual—and we ought not fret too much anent either its appearance or departure. . . ."

He sat, idly sticking the penpoint into the blotter with neurotic brutality, recalling the letter—the doctor's last visit:

"You owe your recovery largely to your mother, no nurse would have stayed by as she did."

Was he to be eternally grateful in that unpleasant manner which turns the helpless debtor against the one who has given without measure? He, a great hulk of a man with a schoolgirl's nerves and a tragic heart, what was he to do with his future? Go on alone! He indulged in further thoughts of what might have been had he remained at his grandfather's level. He would now be a carpenter with a tidy shop, a wife and family, his mother an accepted type of

granny in wudgy dresses, his sisters married in a similar strata—and all quite happy, very likely! Had the climb been worth it?

He recalled several lads in his employ spurred on by the same merciless ambitions—saving their money for education while their parents sifted ashes to save coals. He sometimes longed to thwart these ambitions and point to danger signals ahead. Yet why? What right had he to interfere? It was part of America's progress just as peasants in certain countries were punished with the lash for learning to read—and became martyrs and examples to their children!

His hand fumbled with another unanswered letter received during his illness. Word from his alma mater that they wished to confer an honorary degree upon him in recognition of his book.

This last triumph suggested further memories of embittered youth, ignoring snobs, trying to be unconscious of the genial circle which kept him an outsider, dependent on his mother for inspiration—as well as his washing! Could he never escape the debt? Justine was wrong—he had smashed not because he did what she would have asked but because he failed to do so.

With the furious speed of the drowning he reviewed each step which had brought him to this pass. For instance, his part in the war, barred from action because of poor eyes and age, was the safe task of directing those who faced hell-fire. To be hailed a patriot seemed a mockery, rousing puritanical

neuroses when he remembered letters of praise by self-seeking politicians, a few cancelled checks. What right had he to moan and beat a drum of personal discontent? In comparison, his problems seemed unreal. He was mentally slipping—he must pull up from this abnormal attitude, act brutally if need be—but face facts. He must admit that life was of more consequence than love or justice. He wanted his children, not his mother. Some greater monument than the little church or his collection of paintings on silk which would be put under glass at the museum! In comparison with such pap, to have died in the trenches would have been glorious.

In trying to shield others from life, he had permitted life to evade him. A nebulous swirl of colors it seemed, he standing in maternal shadows. . . . He would not go on alone. He would marry Justine. Having reached this decision he methodically set to work to phrase the indictment against his mother.

Ah, hers was a crime against time. For the present must be composed of one third of yesterday, one third of today and one third of tomorrow, else the trinity is lacking—a trinity as unchanging as the seasons. Martha prevented tomorrow's promise lest it blur yesterday's fulfillment. To deny time was to defy eternity. Small wonder he had smashed!

He wrote a cablegram to Justine, glorious liberation inspiring its wording. He was no longer an ascetic, a libertine, an overly conscientious, muddled soul. The taste for life was his. Only Justine mattered.

He would wait to tell his mother until Easter Sunday when religious fervor was upon her and she would find orthodox comfort. But that, as was Bertha's fate, was really incidental.

Having sent the cable, he sat in the dusk planning extravagant joys, picturing the future as he had never dared to picture it. Tomorrow was his. Justine was tomorrow . . . the world was new, dazzling!

. . . . . .

Martha's house was in order. Personal joy from completing the church was secondary to the contentment of having cleared the way for Jones. She would tell him of her plans after the Easter service.

It had been simple to cope with Bertha—one's wishes are always apt to be considered when a substantial sum acts as aid-de-camp. Bertha had little to lose—much to gain.

During Jones' tedious illness, Jo Willard had begun to write her ponderous letters, send postcards of Detroit, tell of his wife's divorce due to no fault of his, heaven knows, his excellent butcher business—he understood Bertha lacked for nothing in the way of the world's goods—and his loneliness. How glad that Mrs. McGlashan and a Mrs. Gleed and a Mrs. Somebody else in the most casual, roundabout way had written of her—seemed fate, didn't it—and that she was unmarried and handsome—and well off. Well, well! My, what an opening for a millinery business such as hers right up in Detroit—maybe when the boats got to running she would come up and

see for herself—wasn't it a small world, after all? He had lots to say to her. Who knows?

In Bertha's heart stirred hope of that resumed romance. Any glamour concerning Jones had long ago died into disappointment. Poppy's nagging authority had become a burden. Exaggerated rumors concerning Jones' illness were afloat—he would never be well, he had cancer, consumption, heaven knows what—she hated sick men, she knew so well that his mother would watch him like a child. Incidentally, she began to dislike this mother she had grovelled before. She did not quite know why. She thought Jones was ill partly because Justine Dunlevy was "through with him." She had read about Miss Dunlevy's success as a miniature painter in South America! Jo's speedily increasing letters made her feel superior to the entire situation—as if she were of interest to someone. Jones had been right—everyone craved to be essential to someone.

Also, she was shrewd. She concealed any anger when Martha met her on her own ground and they talked as women who knew life at first hand. Jones was very likely to be ill a long time—he was better rid of Bertha and his mother was willing to buy her off—she hoped her son would some day marry. She too, was going away. She realized she had been the reason for his never having done so—a wicked reason. She wondered why Bertha did not go out of town and start into business—she had no idea if she had any friends——

Bertha interrupted with the proud retort that she

was wanted by someone, there was no need to think otherwise, she was no forlornity.

"Then I should go to that someone," advised Martha, "it is right to go where one is wanted and to leave if one is not. Have I made it clear? Does it help you to know I shall go away, too?" eager to make Bertha feel she was not alone in the situation.

Bertha indulged in surly meditation. Then she exclaimed: "There's no pleasure for me to be tolerated —I wish the pair of 'em joy! If only I could be as young again as when he first asked me to dance!"

In her flamboyant black gown with strings of coral beads she presented a somewhat handsome appearance. Martha lied in assuring her that youth, to all intents and purposes, was still hers.

"What of you?" Bertha asked, tender because of this mother's conspiracy.

"I don't matter. Youth matters. I am like many drudging mothers who gave their children advantages and was foolish enough to think I would share in the advantages. But mine is a great satisfaction—if I am no longer essential to my children, I have made them essential to the world—that is enough. I who brought you into Jones' life and pushed Justine from it, I who made him ill but, God grant, have made him well!"

"You're too good for any of them," Martha said roughly, "yet what you say is so—ain't that queer?"

She did not reject the money—"it was coming to her," she felt, pay for her silence even to Poppy. In return, she confided the news that Jo Willard, an

early suitor, had every indication of becoming a tardy husband—no one need feel sorry for little Bertha—no siree!

"I won't see Jones," she decided, "what's the use—it's been hard enough to talk to him of anything, let alone a thing like this breaking up. I don't want to witness his joy. I don't want him to witness my regret—all women are fools such times. If he wants to break the ice and see me, it is up to him. You can tell him I'm going to Detroit to start into business the first of the month and Poppy will stay on here until I've fully established myself—she'll have my address. . . . I won't write—I guess we understand each other."

Martha's remaining ambition was to tell Jones as successfully as she had argued with Bertha that she must live in a perpetual June climate, she wanted to go away at once and stay indefinitely, it was her dearest wish. The flurry of personal prominence about the church's dedication now seemed something to be endured—finished as speedily as possible. She was keen to be away—alone. The letters from her girls expressing regret at not being able to come on for Easter inspired neither resentment nor regret.

It was satisfying to know that none of her grandchildren would have to accomplish the initial toil which had defeated her personal dreams. Their backgrounds were secure, self-respecting no matter how diverse in interests. She was thinking of this as she went with Jones into the church for the Easter

service, unmindful of the homage of all who had gathered to worship.

"Are you satisfied?" Jones asked, when the service had ended and the crowd had left them alone.

"Very satisfied—all I ask is your health and happiness," was her answer.

"I shall have it," Justine's glad answer repeating itself as he spoke.

"I wish," Martha confided as they returned to the lodge, the crocuses lining the path winking up at her, "Justine's portrait could come to life—I would like to tell her something."

Jones paused in their walk—should he explain now, adding in a careless way that Bertha without explanation had seen fit to leave the city? No—not yet—at twilight when she poured tea in the study, Justine's portrait above her—then he would read Justine's cable in reply to his.

Instead, he talked of further altar equipment, wondering why his allowance had not provided for such detail.

"I must rest before dinner—so ought you," she begged, "don't ask me to see any people—this Easter is very solemn," she was telling her brave heart it was the last Easter she would spend in her own home—with her son. But Martha was to be rewarded with one of those dramatic incidents which make life more bearable—one of those swift, startling things which "happen around the corner."

"You have the fortune to witness the result of your own good deeds," Jones said, "most of us are denied

that opportunity," but he knew his voice was vague, his manner lacking interest. He was wondering if Justine had received his mid-ocean wireless message, did she comprehend his love, his joyous strength of purpose? He was prepared to prove that love and happiness were neither accidental nor casual, that should comprise the first argument. What did chapels with snivelling curates and nice old ladies' redeemed and regulation souls matter? Only Justine mattered.

At twilight when he came to see if she would not pour tea, she was sleeping in her great chair. He realized she was strangely dainty of appearance, as if gently bred, unacquainted with hardship. Her wise, withered cheeks were the tint of a halfway opened rose—her wish seemed to have been granted a trifle too late.

Bending down, he saw she did not breathe. In the first rush of grief were two well-defined reactions, proof of Martha's wisdom.

"Mother lived just to see her little church completed."

"Thank God, I cabled Justine before this happened —she will know I would have done her wish regardless."

So the world believed, including her daughters, that Martha Bynight lived only to see the completed church—and she was spared the pain of her son's marriage.

After which event a few gossips murmured about the eldest Bynight's marriage in a lion's cage and his

grandson's marriage in his own church—what a ferris wheel the social game proved to be!

If Jones wondered it was with proper masculine conceit, not concerning either his mother or Bertha. But—would Justine not have returned eventually, trusting to his love to see that all was well?

If Justine wondered it concerned her children's future. She shared the wise fears of the gently born who realize that only by foresight and wisdom can the children of such as they retain their leadership and purpose among men! Her problem, removed from Martha's, was equal in complexity. Martha had watched her children climb beyond her; Justine must take heed lest hers wandered beneath her!

It was Justine's summary of his mother that Jones accepted as his consolation:

"Your heritage from this brave visioned woman is an ideal—service! It is our duty to bequeath it to our children, in unlike terms, but with the same selfless sincerity."

THE END

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